

ETHICS AND ESTHETICS
IN ANDRE GIDE'S
LES FAUX-MONNAYEURS

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1988

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John Addison Lambeth

Dedicated to

Philip Stanhope Lambeth

whose recent arrival helped put everything
in proper perspective

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Journal d'André Gide I</u>	(JAG I)
<u>Journal d'André Gide II</u>	(JAG II)
<u>Romans, Récits et Soties, Oeuvres lyriques</u> (Pléaïde Edition)	(III)
<u>Oeuvres Complètes d'André Gide</u> (15 vols.)	(OC I,II,III,...)

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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April, 1988

Chairman: Professor Raymond Gay-Crosier
Major Department: Romance Languages and Literatures

André Gide's experimental novel, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, has frequently been criticized as esthetically flawed and as ethically naive. Critics have, on the one hand, considered Gide's novel to be an exercise in self-absorption, attempting to normalize the notion of homosexual relationships between men and boys, or on the other, an interesting novelistic experiment but lacking coherence. Many of his social-minded contemporaries found his novel to be overly concerned with esthetics, totally ignoring a deepening social crisis in the wake of World War I. In recent years there has been a reevaluation of Gide's novel and critics have tended to put aside any ethical considerations, judging Les Faux-Monnayeurs solely on formal criteria.

I believe that Les Faux-Monnayeurs is both esthetically and ethically coherent and that many critics have ignored

its subtle ethical foundations, blinded by the rigorous construction that they have discovered. They have failed to grasp the significant marriage of the medium and the message in this novel.

Gide described his early novels as a mosaic of works that he conceived simultaneously, all dealing with the same problem, authenticity, from different perspectives. He considered none of them to be truly novels precisely because they were told from a single perspective. Les Faux-Monnayeurs was to be a true novel, told from multiple perspective.

Les Faux-Monnayeurs is a synthetic work, referring to and reproducing many styles of novelistic discourse and form. It is a novel about writing and reading. The counterfeit gold coin functions as a metaphor for literature and the counterfeit reality that it represents. The coin is also symbolic of the relationship between the novelist and his public and it calls into question the whole problem of relative values in the modern world. Gide's use of the mise en abyme narrative technique creates a novelistic puzzle that forces the reader to actively participate in the search for meaning. The mise en abyme is a formal analog to the paradoxical structure of irony. They are both models of the alterity of being and serve as vehicles to convey the fundamental problem of ethical uncertainty and relative values.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

André Gide began to write Les Faux-Monnayeurs in 1919 at the age of fifty. By this time he was a widely read and respected critic, essayist, playwright, translator and 'fictional author.' This last circumlocution derives from Gide's idiosyncratic genre distinctions. The dedication at the beginning of Les Faux-Monnayeurs reads

A Roger Martin du Gard
je dédie mon premier roman
en témoignage d'amitié profonde.
A.G. (III,p.932)

That Gide should consider this work his first novel might come as a surprise to some who have read his earlier works such as l'Immoraliste, la Porte étroite, Isabelle, les Caves du Vatican and la Symphonie pastorale. These works are commonly considered to be novels today and so they were in Gide's time as well. Gide himself had, prior to the publication of Isabelle, referred to his early work as novels.

But in the period following the founding of the Nouvelle Revue Française Gide began a serious reflection on

the nature and function of the novel. This reflection germinated and blossomed forth in the context of an ongoing debate among various literary tendencies represented by their respective journals and magazines. Auguste Anglès describes this literary quarrel

Qu'il s'agisse d'esthétique, de politique, de religion, de morale, toutes ces "directions" recourent l'un des débats enchevêtrés de l'époque qui voit la restauration des valeurs "classiques" et la critique du "romantisme". C'est un exemple de ces "captures" qu'on rencontre dans l'histoire des idées comme dans celle des fleuves: progressivement, une question prend tant d'importance dans les polémiques qu'elle attire à elle ses voisines.¹

In this rather confusing debate of accusations and counter-accusations, Anglès isolates three major themes

celui des 'qualités classiques' opposées aux 'aberrations romantiques'; celui du classicisme considéré comme seule expression du génie français, et de la précellence attribuée à ce dernier; celui des mérites de l'esprit d'exploration psychologique et morale.²

This debate may be understood as symptomatic of what various critics have called the crisis of the novel³ or the crisis of the concept of literature.⁴ Michel Raimond finds the roots of this crisis in the dissolution of the naturalist school in the 1890s, while Albert Léonard finds them in the esthetics of Mallarmé, spiritual leader of the

symbolist movement, also in the 1890s. In an attempt to better understand André Gide's esthetic position in relation to this crisis, I propose to examine his evolution as a writer in the historical context of the Third French Republic. It is not my purpose here to reduce Gide to a simple product of this period, but rather to examine certain influences that helped to shape his vision of the novel and eventually led him to write Les Faux-Monnayeurs. I am encouraged in this endeavor by Gide's own essay, "De l'influence en littérature," published in 1900, in which he says of the artist

Que peut-il? Seul! --Il est débordé. il n'a pas assez de ses cinq sens pour palper le monde; de ses vingt-quatre heures par jour, pour vivre, penser, s'exprimer. Il n'y suffit pas, il le sent. Il a besoin d'adjoints, de substituts, de secrétaires. (OC III, p.251)

I shall begin by examining the intellectual climate in which Gide grew up, giving particular attention to the philosophical bases for the literary movements that had formed in France at the time of Gide's entry into the literary scene in 1889 with the composition of his first 'novel,' Les Cahiers d'André Walter. It is my contention that the ideas Gide expresses in his early work, particularly regarding the relation between subjective reality and objective reality, and by extension, the relation between the text and the 'real' world, were to

remain his primary concerns through all of his subsequent work. I will first look at the dominant philosophical and esthetic movements of his early years before describing the reaction of which he was a part.

The third chapter concerns Gide's literary production up until 1919 when he began work on Les Faux-Monnayeurs. I discuss his early writings, the importance of his involvement with the Symbolist movement and Stéphane Mallarmé in particular and his involvement with the dominant literary journal of his time, La Nouvelle Revue française. Gide has explicitly rejected the notion of an evolution in his literary production, claiming rather that he had conceived of the totality of his literary works up until Les Faux-Monnayeurs from the beginning and that his individual works should be seen as pieces of a mosaic, each exploring a different aspect of narrative technique.

The fourth chapter is an examination of certain classic narrative elements in Les Faux-Monnayeurs such as description, dialogue and narrative voice. The point of the chapter is to show on the one hand the multitude of techniques that Gide employs and the subtlety with which he blends them, and on the other hand the paradoxical nature of this self-reflective novel that continually escapes a standard narratological analysis.

The fifth chapter is an analysis of a hallmark of Gidian fiction, the 'mise en abyme,' pushed to its limits in

Les Faux-Monnayeurs. I refer particularly to recent structuralist critiques of Gide's novel that help reveal both the complexity of his project and its coherence.

The last chapter then is a critique of the certain reductionist aspects of the structuralist approach that reveal Gide's subtle technique but in so doing conceal major thematic concerns of an ethical nature as well as the ethical nature of his formal concerns. Gide's predilection for a subversive form of argumentation by misdirection gradually draws the reader into a web of uncertainty, raising question but offering no answers or only inadequate ones.

Les Faux-Monnayeurs at first glance seems to stand outside of history. There are contradictory references to people or historical events that could not logically coexist, although the basic field of historical reference is the early 20th century before World War I. On the other hand, there is a very rich social milieu within the novel. Besides novelists there are educators and students, a scientist, a psychiatrist, a preacher, a musician, housewives, lawyers and criminals. Furthermore, money, a dominant form of social interaction, is a central metaphor in the novel. I will attempt to reintegrate the notion of history in a broad sense as a subliminal leitmotif in Les Faux-Monnayeurs, a novel fundamentally concerned with the problems of communication and values.

NOTES

1. Auguste Anglès, André Gide et le premier groupe de la Nouvelle Revue française, Paris, Gallimard, 1978, p.199.

2. Ibid., p.200.

3. Michel Raimond, La Crise du roman aux lendemains du Naturalisme aux années vingt, Paris, José Corti, 1966.

4. Albert Léonard, La Crise du concept de littérature en France au XXe Siècle, Paris, José Corti, 1974.

CHAPTER 2

THIRD REPUBLIC BELIEFS AND VALUES

Positivism and Educational Reform

Positivism, as a philosophical movement, has its roots in the writings of Auguste Comte. He used the term 'positive' in opposition to what he perceived as negative thought in Hegelian dialectics. Although Comte was a rather crude empiricist, deriving his method from scientific investigation, he added the interesting twist of historicism. He believed in stages in the history of ideas, from the religious to the metaphysical and finally to the scientific. Comte denied metaphysics and attempted to transform philosophical theory into scientific theory. Marcuse says of Comte's project,

'Philosophie positive' is, in the last analysis, a *contradictio in adjecto*. It refers to the synthesis of all empirical knowledge ordered into a system of harmonious progress following an inexorable course. All opposition to social realities is obliterated from philosophical discussion.¹

In other words, Comte wanted to develop an independent science of society that would concern itself only with facts, not with transcendental illusions. He saw society as an organized system, like nature, that the science of sociology would eventually elucidate completely. Comte's writings were very clear and common-sensical, which perhaps accounts at least in part, for his great popularity. Comte read the works of the German philosopher Emmanuel Kant and agreed with his fundamental distinction between 'noumena,' things in themselves, and 'phenomena,' things as we perceive them. Comte decided that the search for true knowledge was necessarily limited to the systematic study of phenomena from which one could derive general laws. Any speculation concerning first causes or ultimate ends was disallowed as it was not subject to scientific verification through observation.

Positivism was, in a very real sense, a program for society because Comte believed that from scientific method one could make predictions and from these predictions one could act. In his Cours de Philosophie Positive Comte gives four primary applications of positivism: 1) the rational and objective search for the laws governing the human mind, 2) educational reform with special emphasis on the spirit of scientific inquiry and the interdependency of the sciences, 3) the systematic perfection and definition of each of the specialized fields of scientific inquiry, and 4) the re-

organization of society.² In his explanation of the first point Comte rejects out of hand any possibility of knowledge through introspection

Mais quant à observer de la même manière les phénomènes intellectuels pendant qu'ils s'exécutent, il y a impossibilité manifeste. L'individu pensant ne saurait se partager en deux, dont l'un raisonnerait, tandis que l'autre regarderait raisonner. L'organe observé et l'organe observateur étant, dans ce cas, identiques, comment l'observation pourrait-elle avoir lieu?³

I will have occasion to return to this problem of the divided subject in the discussion below of realist literature and the problem of the narrator. Before coming back to this point it will be useful to look at some of the effects of Comte's method in three other areas: educational reform, delineating fields of inquiry, and the re-organization of society.

Positivism, with its pragmatic vision and its naive belief in inexorable human progress through science, was the ideal philosophy for the managerial Republicans who were to gain control of France in the wake of the debacle of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. Indeed the Republicans immediately began to make far-reaching reforms in economic policy, administrative organization, and the educational system. They found a certain justification for their anti-clericalism in Comte's notion of stages; religion was

perceived as a primitive world view. They gradually sought to eradicate all traces of religious teaching from the public school system. Comte was not necessarily hostile to the idea of religion, but he opposed both the unverifiable dogmas of Catholicism and the critical metaphysics of Protestantism. Charles Lalo writes that

D'une part, avec les conservateurs, il affirme le besoin d'une autorité, d'une hiérarchie, même d'une tradition, voire d'une religion, pourvu que toutes ces forces d'organisation soient pénétrées du nouvel esprit scientifique.⁴

When the Republicans took over the school system they distributed new textbooks on history, literature and morals in the primary and secondary schools. They replaced religious teaching with their own lay morality.

In the late nineteenth century a new attack on the Catholic Church, this time by the Republicans (many of them Protestants), repeated the process in areas where the Church had hitherto been supreme. Till then, popular education had been basically religious . . . keeping with this tradition . . . the Republicans made their primary schools concentrate on morals.⁵

The Third Republic is rightfully called "la république des professeurs" in which even the "instituteurs" had become the chosen agents of Republican propaganda among the people.

Theodore Zeldin documents the presence of a large contingent of Protestants in the Third Republic government

and they tended, of course, to hire assistants with similar ideas; this was especially the case in the educational system. Fernand Buisson, for instance, was director of primary education from 1879 until 1896. He was a well known author, a member of the Radical Party and of the League of the Rights of Man, and later president of the powerful Ligue d'Enseignement. Buisson developed a neo-Protestant doctrine in his book Christianisme libéral calling for a radical separation but complementarity between Church and school. He promoted what he called "la foi laïque."⁶

Buisson was greatly influenced by a Catholic heretic who spent his life attacking the Church, the philosopher Charles Renouvier. He was the author of numerous textbooks for teachers of Republican morals. In 1873, he converted to Protestantism and later, in the pages of his journal La Critique philosophique, he recommended the conversion of France to Protestantism as a solution to social unrest and moral decadence. This neo-Protestant tendency grounded its moral system in the writings of Kant and in the belief in human progress through the development of the intellect.

These ideas dovetailed nicely with the positivism of Comte's disciple Jules Ferry. He appointed a Protestant pastor, Félix Pécaut, as headmaster of the Ecole Normale at Fontenay-aux-Roses, the primary teacher training college for "institutrices." Pécaut gave frequent lessons on morals and inspired devoted admiration in the young women.⁷ Ferry, as

minister of education, preserved Comte's popularity by giving him a large place in the syllabus. Comte believed that education should be both emotional and esthetic, using the observation of concrete phenomena and active methods to promote sociability in the masses. He also gave primacy to moral education and even expressed admiration for the Jesuits' educational skills, specifically because they sought active and voluntary submission as opposed to sterile and disorganized discussion.⁸ Comte went so far as to recommend that education be governed by an independent, autonomous corporation of intellectuals which provided Ferry with the theoretical justification to make the university a self-governing body.

Ferry also introduced composition into primary education, stressing a positive method of observation. Zeldin provides evidence that, not only was near-universal literacy achieved during this period in France but that the children learned to write well.

After the decline of religion, great stress was laid on choosing the very best prose, by the most admired writers. Reading, indeed education as a whole continued to be seen as a conquest of values.⁹

The core of the new educational system remained the teaching of moral and civic values. Jules Ferry and Paul Bert made morals teaching a part of the syllabus; they

believed that every child should serve a moral apprenticeship. The day would begin in lay schools with a lesson in morals replacing the catechism of Church schools. Although the Republican morality was quite conservative, the Catholic Church, in reaction to the real threat of being supplanted among the people by a secular state, placed these new textbooks of morals on the Index. This seems a bit extreme by today's standards. Paul Bert's textbook of 1882, although it favored progress, was intended to inculcate the masses with social values and a sense of voluntary submission to the state.¹⁰

If the spread of primary education, stimulated by competition between public and Church schools, had produced near-universal literacy in France by the turn of the century, secondary education catered only to a small minority. Between 1881 and 1920 the percentage of boys 11 to 17 in secondary schools never surpassed six percent. In 1887 fifty-six percent of secondary schools were state lycées or collèges, thirteen percent were private lay schools and thirty-one percent were Church private.¹¹ During the long Third Republic, the amount of time students spent in seven years of secondary school studying 'Letters' slowly declined to the primary benefit of science in both the classical and modern options. It should be noted though that about half the science instruction was in mathematics and the scientific training itself was primarily theoretical. Also,

even though the numbers of new bacheliers for each year remained virtually static, they were having increasing difficulty finding jobs. Their options were either to go on to the university in order to specialize, occasionally to step into a lucrative family business, or most often, to simply take what they could get: jobs as clerks, tutors, journalists or civil servants. Undoubtedly, they were an elite group: six percent of their generation was to receive secondary education while the rest of their peers were serving apprenticeships for trades, setting up small businesses or working in mines, in factories or on farms; but they were often disappointed to discover that the rhetoric of equality was hollow and privilege was still divided according to class lines. Gide recalls his childhood education in a particularly lucid statement from his autobiography, "J'étais privilégié sans le savoir, comme j'étais Français et protestant sans le savoir . . ." (OC XIII, p.226) Les Faux-Monnayeurs vividly portrays the atmosphere of a Protestant lay lycée, drawn directly from Gide's own experience as recounted in Si le grain ne meurt.

The teaching of literature and history, especially in the state and private lay lycées, was greatly influenced by two professors at the Sorbonne imbued with Comtian positivism: Hippolyte Taine and Ernest Renan. It was in his Histoire de la littérature anglaise, published in 1863, that Taine exposed his influential theory of 'race, milieu et

moment.' He meticulously developed these three parameters in his analysis of the history of English literature and did it so eloquently that his approach became a standard for textbooks of literature.¹² Once again, in his autobiography, Gide recalls avidly reading all of Taine's books while a student in the lycée. (OC XIII, p.300) Ironically, Taine, a progressive Republican, was later to see his ideas on race used by the most conservative elements in France to justify a rising nationalism accompanied by xenophobia. In a later work, Origines de la France contemporaine, Taine tried to define, in the wake of the debacle of the Second Empire, the essence of the French nation and to give a unified identity to its people. However, as Zeldin states,

The effects of his Origins of Contemporary France was thus not to turn Frenchmen against Germany, but to urge them to move on the same conservative, indeed reactionary, path that Germany was following.¹³

Ernest Renan was at odds with Taine concerning the essence of a nation. In a famous lecture at the Sorbonne in 1882 called "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" Renan declared race to be an inadequate criterion, as was language. A nation was, he said, a common tradition and a consent in the present, that is, a desire to live together and to continue to develop one's cultural heritage.¹⁴ Although Renan's approach scandalized Catholic and Monarchist sentiment, his

ideas were basically conservative and served as a justification of the status quo. In an early essay called L'Avenir de la science, written in 1848 but not published until 1890, Renan expresses a firm belief in the progress of humanity through the marriage of scientific spirit with imagination. Science, he said, was his religion.¹⁵ From 1865 until 1885 he published a series of volumes under the general title Histoire des origines du christianisme in which, using positive methods, he argued against the divinity of Christ and generally portrayed religion as a cultural byproduct.¹⁶ His work obviously found its place in the Republican syllabus.

It is difficult to judge the true impact of positive philosophy on French society. Being a part of the syllabus in public schools, of course, did not ensure universal acceptance, nor did it ensure even an adequate understanding by the teachers or their students. As is always the case with the popularization of theories, they were watered down, revised, and associated with other ideas or currents of thought. But positivism had the advantage of appealing to a very pragmatic sense of empirical observation. The systematic organization of knowledge into fields of inquiry and specializations gave a sense of progress toward palpable truths. It is certain that Comte's notion that society and man could be analyzed objectively through proper techniques of observation and verification had great influence on

intellectuals and, through them, on many others of generations to come. In a more general sense, in alliance with pure and particularly applied sciences, it contributed to the scientific spirit that was to dominate the Third Republic not only in the development of human sciences but even in the elaboration of a new esthetic. Indeed, observation of concrete reality and the verisimilitude of an author or an artist's representation of reality gradually supplanted the Romantic esthetic revolving around the individual, emotion and introspection.

Zola and the Experimental Novel

Balzac and Flaubert were the models of realism for the young writers of the 1870s. They told their stories through omniscient third-person narrators, concentrating, particularly in the case of Balzac, on minute descriptions of places, people and causally linked events. Their narrators told their stories much as an historian would and they frequently incorporated actual historical events into the narrative both to increase the feeling of identification in the reader and to appeal to his sense of verisimilitude. Balzac frequently used physiological traits to portray the personalities of his characters. Stendhal, though he was not to attain great prestige until later, believed that his text was like a mirror of the real world and he strove to create

a style as pure and objective as the 'Code Civil.' It should not be assumed that these writers were the dominant ones of their generation. Balzac was the only one of the three mentioned who achieved durable popular success in his time. Hugo, Georges Sand, Prosper Mérimée and Eugène Sue, among others, were very popular Romantic writers of the period. But it was nevertheless the inheritors of Balzac, above all Emile Zola, who, in the 1870s, constituted a movement based on scientific principles of observation and experimentation --the naturalist school.

The esthetic of the naturalist school was formulated in the pages of the Soirées de Medan by Emile Zola, Maupassant, the Goncourt brothers and J.K. Huysmans and others. The most extensive statement of this esthetic is found in Zola's 1882 work, Le Roman expérimental. Zola uses the term 'experimental' not in the sense of formal experimentation, but rather in a scientific sense based on data observation and cause to effect, or inductive inference, which he had found in a book by the physiologist Dr. Claude Bernard entitled Introduction à la médecine expérimentale. Zola saw the novel as a type of laboratory in which to experimentally observe the behavior of human beings. He states

Le romancier est fait d'un observateur et d'un expérimentateur. L'observateur, chez lui, donne les faits tels qu'il les a observés, pose le point de départ, établit le terrain solide sur lequel vont marcher les personnages et se développer les phénomènes. Puis l'expérimentateur

paraît et institue l'expérience, je veux dire fait mouvoir les personnages dans une histoire particulière pour y montrer que la succession des faits y sera telle que l'exige le déterminisme des phénomènes mis à l'étude.¹⁷

Already in 1864, in their Journal, the Goncourt brothers portrayed themselves as historians of the present and expressed a desire to bring the 'lower classes' into the novel. The naturalists believed that their works were a transcription of 'life as it is,' were true representations of reality. Not, to be sure, the reality of actual events, but the reality of natural laws represented by fictional events and characters. Their pseudo-scientific position did not last long under the pressure of more rigorous critics, discussed below, and there were numerous defections within this loosely connected group. Maupassant soon abandoned his naturalist style novel of manners in favor of psychological novels. Huysmans began to write, with Là-Bas, what he called a 'naturalisme spiritualiste.' Gustave Flaubert, present at the early elaborations of the naturalist esthetic, quickly distanced himself from the others, following his own line of reasoning which soon led him to his last and probably most enigmatic novel, Bouvard et Pécuchet. This ironic and fundamentally pessimistic novel is a scathing attack on the middle class and on the naive vision of progress through positive science. Flaubert's unlikely heroes, two obscure

clerks, find only disaster in their experiments and only disillusionment in their quest for knowledge.

Certainly the enduring popularity of Zola's works owes more to the pathos, the politics and his epic style than to his ideas on social determinism, but his rapid ascension as a best selling author does reflect the scientific spirit of his times. As previously mentioned, through the active intervention of men like Jules Ferry, the new scientific doctrine was disseminated to the middle and lower classes through an increasingly state dominated educational system. Zola's massive book sales rose along with the literacy rate in France. As reactionary as his ideas of social determinism may seem today, Zola represented social progress for his contemporaries. He lent his eloquent pen to creating sympathy for the condition of the working class.

Michel Raimond shows clearly that the writers of the Naturalist group organized a veritable public relations campaign in favor of their novels.¹⁸ They scandalized the literary world with their graphic depictions of daily life among the poor and with their equally graphic display of language hitherto censured in literature. They replied to their detractors with insolence, causing further scandal and profited from the attention they received by issuing manifestoes denouncing idealistic and Romantic writers. Undoubtedly, a great number of their readers bought their works because of the scandal they caused or in order to

better condemn them, but it seems evident, in light of their tremendous commercial success, particularly that of Zola, that they had struck a chord of common scientific vision among the readers of the period. This "scientific" vision had invaded such diverse areas of intellectual activity as sociology, history, literary criticism, literature and painting, not to mention politics and education. Observation and analysis were the touchstones of the objective positive method.

Classical and Spiritual Values

Naturalism had its detractors from the beginning. Ferdinand Brunetière of the Académie Française, for example, criticized the naturalists in his La Banqueroute du naturalisme in the name of classical values. J.K. Huysmans, a defector, came to criticize them for their lack of esthetic, spiritual and moral values. Eugène Melchior de Vogüé, in his Roman russe (1885) compared the naturalist novelists to their Russian counterparts, pointing to the clear superiority of the latter. De Vogue saw in the novels of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky an instrument for the study of morals, psychology, society and philosophy.

The writers of the naturalist school, including Zola, though not until after the completion of his Rougon-Macquart series in 1892, evolved in reaction to criticism and in

accordance with their own changing perspectives, gradually orienting themselves either toward psychological studies or toward a spiritualist, a poetic or a fantastic realism.¹⁹ If the naturalists seem to dominate the literary scene of the early Third Republic, it is probably because they represent so well the spirit of the times. But it should not be assumed that they were the only interesting writers of the period nor the only popular ones.

Idealist novelists such as Octave Feuillet, Georges Ohnet and Victor Cherbuliez enjoyed moderate success especially among upper middle class readers. In their works, one often finds disenfranchised aristocrats searching for ideals to give meaning to their lives in a materialistic world. Gobineau, Barbey d'Aurevilly and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam all shared an equal contempt for the modern world and Paul Adam, in Le Mystère des foules (1888), is stridently anti-scientistic. These writers received enthusiastic support from the Catholic reaction and often took up the banner of anti-naturalist, anti-scientistic sentiment in the literary journals.²⁰

One of the most talented critics of naturalism was the young Catholic writer Paul Bourget. As early as 1883, in an article for Le Parlement called "Vers l'idéal," Bourget expressed an unqualified condemnation of naturalism. His 1889 novel Le Disciple is a subtle, impassioned denunciation of the scientific materialism of his contemporaries. His

novels were psychological and moral studies designed to clarify the complexities of the human mind, but there is an invasion of bourgeois ideology in his writing and he frequently falls into the 'roman à thèse.'²¹ His style was very traditional and his characters rather conventional, but he was recognized as one of the masters of the genre by the turn of the century. Gide was later to give qualified praise to Bourget whose ability he admired, but whose style he chose not to imitate.

La "vraisemblabilité" (je crois que c'est son mot) chez Bourget est parfaite. Emule de Balzac, il est profondément enfoncé dans la réalité. Il ne s'y empêtre jamais, comme je ferais sûrement si j'essayais d'y réussir. Ma réalité reste toujours quelque peu fantastique. (JAG I, p.992)

Pierre Loti was a brilliant and non-conventional writer of this period, blending fantasy with emotion to produce poetic and often exotic novels. Loti characterized great novels by their capacity to "dépasser l'anecdote pour en faire un symbole de la condition humaine."²² He condemned the 'naturalist vulgarities' in his acceptance speech before the Académie Française.²³

Jules Renard is perhaps one of the most original writers of the period. He refused the false dramatization of situations, so common to other idealist novels, and eschewed conventional forms. L'Ecornifleur is written in concise and ironic style. Raimond says,

. . . Renard a été, au sortir du naturalisme, sur la voie d'une esthétique nouvelle: mélange du réel et de l'idéal, du sérieux et de l'ironie, du réel et du rêve, qui devait s'épanouir, avant 1914, chez Francis de Miomandre, Giraudoux et Colette.²⁴

Yet none of these dissenting voices ever formed a coherent group, linked only by their unanimous condemnation of naturalism and the materialist bent of their rivals. Their repeated attacks eventually succeeded in discrediting the naturalist esthetic but they were never able to find a new esthetic of their own and so left a void. Their refutation of the Medan dogmas ended in a crisis of the novel.²⁵

This cursory summary of the novel in France during the first two decades of the Third Republic is an attempt to set the scene for André Gide's entry into literature. I have dealt primarily with the novel and the quarrels about its form and content because I want to trace the general problematic of the relationship between representation and reality. This problematic relationship may be artificially divided into two fundamental aspects, the esthetic and the ethical, which are in practice difficult to separate. The esthetic aspect may be characterized as the way in which the novel presents itself as art, that is, its normative aspect inasmuch as it represents coherent genre distinctions revolving around the questions of form and content. The

form and technique of the idealist and the naturalist writers mentioned above are similar--primarily third-person narration and alternating sequences of description, dialogues and analysis. On the level of content, however, they differ radically. Zola was criticized by the idealists not for his style as such, but for the vulgar language and situations that he depicted which, abstracting the ethical implications in these judgments, comes down to a question of what constitutes beauty. For the naturalists, esthetic beauty was a function of thematic coherence and the objective truth of the situation presented. The idealists certainly agreed as concerns the thematic coherence, but they appealed to subjective truths that they found, not in science, but in philosophy and religion. Furthermore, whereas the idealists tended to portray individual crises of a metaphysical order, the naturalists portrayed social situations in which the individual was merely living out his biologically or socially determined existence.

From the ethical point of view, one could again separate form from content. Obviously, as described in the preceding paragraph, characters and situations are subject to ethical judgments. The decisions that the characters make in the situations created by the author reflect moral judgments and the eventual results of these decisions, in a certain sense, reflect the moral judgments of the author. However, this is not always an easy point to decide. Viewed

historically, naturalist writers removed moral responsibility from their characters as individuals because they were subject to forces beyond their control. Their condition was a social problem, not an individual one, and this appealed to a progressive sentiment of social reform to alleviate the conditions that caused their 'depravity.' On the other hand, this very determinism that liberates them from responsibility also denies their individual freedom to control their own destiny. Furthermore, a primary formal question, the position of the narrator in relation to the situations and events in the novel, complicates the narrative situation. Is the narrator, as presented, truly objective and reliable? Is he subject to the same forces as those dictating the behavior and judgements of his characters? By what criteria does the narrator analyze the characters and situations he has created?

One may speak of ethics in another sense as regards the relation of the novel to the public. It is, after all, an act of communication that carries a message or messages and that, by the act of publication, invites comment and interpretation. What is the function of the novel in relation to its readers? The novel, since its inception, has been judged by moral standards, particularly, as mentioned above, as regards its content. Flaubert had to stand trial for his sympathetic portrayal of Emma Bovary. The naturalists were attacked for appealing to the prurient

interests of their readers. This relationship between writer and reader is also a question of form; not only what information is presented but how it is presented, in whose mouth and with what tone. These questions involve complex answers that shall be treated further in the course of the discussion of Gide's novels.

One last point before leaving the discussion of Zola and his naturalist colleagues. The commercial success of a novel is, though by no means a definitive measure of quality, at least a reliable measure of its wide public echo. As mentioned above, the naturalists were very astute in their use of public relations techniques and after Zola's astounding commercial success with Nana in 1879, they parlayed this popularity into a power base that seemed to feed on itself. Zola's novels prior to Nana were reprinted and sold by the tens of thousands as were his subsequent volumes in the Rougon-Macquart series. As much as the naturalist novels were a result of a certain social situation and a confluence of ideas, so too did they serve to disseminate and consecrate certain values by giving them voice within a symbolic context. In other words, the novel has an ideological function that is, in an absolute sense, unavoidable. The problem though, in this period, was that both the naturalist and the idealist novels, tributary to ideological systems, became novels of ideas and, as such,

didactic and moralistic; the plots became formulaic, the characters conventional.

This dilemma was not to be resolved. In 1905, in a response to a questionnaire by Le Cardonnell and Vellay, Edmond Jaloux stated that French novelists had to search for new techniques; Gide responding to the same questionnaire, expressed the belief that the French novel was entering a period in which the appearance of new characters would transform the novel.²⁶ As Gide was later to write in his 1936 preface to L'Immoraliste, ". . . en art, il n'y a pas de problème dont l'oeuvre d'art ne soit la suffisante solution." (III,p.367)

Subjectivity and Vitalism

André Gide began writing his Journal in 1889; he had finished his year of philosophy at the Lycée Henri IV and was completing his first novel, Les Cahiers d'André Walter. Before discussing this novel, it will be useful to consider some of the events and publications of that year as an example of the turmoil and contradictions of the period. That year, the centenary of the French Revolution, saw the opening of the World Exhibition in France, covering the whole of the Champs de Mars, with large annexes on the Esplanade des Invalides and in the Trocadero Gardens. Here

is a description from the pen of Frantz Jourdain in the weekly magazine L'Illustration

Le plâtre, le moellon, la brique ne dissimulent plus, sous un mensonger décor, le fer ou la fonte . . . Les staffs, les faïences, les terres cuites, les laves émaillées, les briques vernissées, les zincs laqués, les mosaïques chatoyantes, les enduits coloriés, les verres flamboyants, toute la vaillante palette de la polychromie architectonique réjouit la vue, miroite sous le soleil et chante le triomphe de l'esprit français, de la gaieté gauloise, du rationalisme dur une morne et préhistorique scolastique.²⁷

Jourdain goes on, in the same exalted tone, to describe the Eiffel Tower, controversial centerpiece of this centennial exhibition, as a new divinity, "mathématiquement implacable comme la destinée."²⁸ The World Exhibition was a source of great national pride and its opulence served as a consecration of the embattled Third Republic and its scientistic spirit.

The major literary successes of 1889 were Zola's La Bête humaine, Fort comme la mort by Maupassant, George Ohnet's idealist novel Docteur Rameau, Japoneries d'Automne by Pierre Loti and Bob à l'Exposition by Gyp. It was also the year that Taine published his L'Avenir de la Science, stating in the preface, "La science est ma religion."²⁹

The same year saw the publication of Bourget's bitter attack on the republic of scientific experimentation, Le Disciple; and Eugène-Melchior de Vogue published an article

in the influential Revue des Deux Mondes entitled "Prière sur la Tour Eiffel." He wrote,

Toi, fille du savoir, courbe ton orgueil
 . . . c'est peu d'éclairer l'esprit si l'on ne
 guérit pas l'éternelle peine du coeur . . . Sache
 fonder le temple de la nouvelle alliance de la
 science et de la foi.³⁰

The most devastating attack, though little noticed at the time, came that same year from the young philosopher Henri Bergson in his work Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience. Bergson's subtle and rigorous arguments were later to be very influential in laying the groundwork for a reaction against determinism and current scientific dogma.

In his 1889 essay, Bergson attacked the contradictions inherent in both mechanist and dynamist approaches to psychological phenomena. In both he saw a tendency toward dualism as they both speak of objective and subjective reality, giving precedence to one or the other of these two aspects of experience. One of Bergson's primary critiques is what he described as the spatialization of that which should be more properly understood in terms of its duration. This spatialization or quantification of sensory experience tends to ignore qualitative distinctions which can only be properly understood through intensive rather than extensive aspects of their existence. During his long career Bergson continued to develop his critique of positivism and his

vitalist principles led him to revalorize the notions of duration, intuition and what he termed 'creative evolution.' His teaching had a major impact on esthetic values--Proust is only the most striking example--during the Belle Epoque. Gide, in an entry in his Journal in 1908 comments on his reading of L'Evolution créatrice

Importance admirable de ce livre, par où peut s'échapper de nouveau la philosophie.

Que notre intelligence découpe, dans le continu extérieur, des surfaces sur lesquelles elle puisse opérer: que le reste lui échappe; qu'elle ne tienne compte que de cela . . . (JAG I, p.269)

Another interesting part of Bergson's 1889 essay and which he continued to develop in his later work, is his critique of language. In the preface to Les Données immédiates he points to a fundamental contradiction that arises in any philosophical investigation that attempts to juxtapose in space phenomena that don't occupy space at all, ". . . une traduction illégitime de l'inétendu en étendu, de la qualité en quantité . . ." ³¹ He constantly examines idiomatic expressions of everyday language which give a notion of extensivity to sensations: 'une grande douleur' or 'un désir grandissant' for example. Positive science, playing on these common-sensical expressions, erroneously attributed extensive measures to qualities. Bergson saw the need to develop an intensive language that could properly

represent the duration of sensations, not a predicative language that fixes phenomena in time through definition, but rather a metaphorical language.

It is easy to see the esthetic parallels that can be drawn from this type of philosophical investigation, but Bergson's influence should not be overstated. In fact, he did not really create a new 'intensive' language. His prose style remained rigorously classical and its very clarity represented an underlying contradiction of content by form. Moreover, although Bergson was to achieve great popularity in the coming years with his optimistic philosophy of creative evolution, his ideas sustained a probing reevaluation following the death and destruction of World War I. Gide was later to criticize Bergson

Ce qui me déplait dans la doctrine de Bergson, c'est tout ce que je pense déjà sans qu'il le dise, et tout ce qu'elle a de flatteur, de caressant même, pour l'esprit. Plus tard on croira découvrir partout son influence sur notre époque, simplement parce que lui-même est de son époque et qu'il cède sans cesse au mouvement. D'où son importance représentative. (JAG I, p.782)

The tone is harsh but Gide's point is well taken. Bergson is an important representative of the ideas of his time and should be given credit for his reasoned and eloquent expression of discontent and reservations concerning the impingement of positive science into the human sciences and by extension into art. A succession of managerial Republican

governments was rapidly secularizing daily life and Bergson was correct to point out the linguistic pervasiveness of positivist thought.

Gide's position within this period of conflicting values can be traced through his Journal, which he began in 1889, his autobiography, Si le grain ne meurt, Jean Delay's biography, La Jeunesse d'André Gide, and Claude Martin's remarkable work, La Maturité d'André Gide. The first two works offer an interesting contrast in both style and judgement concerning Gide's early interests and ambitions. Si le grain ne meurt was written concurrently with Les Faux-Monnayeurs and so offers some interesting insights not only with regard to his early life, but to his preoccupations in the early 1920s. This is not an attempt to explain Gide's work simply through biographical data, rather I intend to choose elements of this data that indicate certain literary and philosophical preferences that he exhibited and the influences that contributed specifically to the development of his fluid esthetic of the novel in the context of a generalized crisis in esthetic and moral values. Without a doubt the most important of these formative influences was his involvement in the Symbolist movement and particularly with the brilliant poet Stéphane Mallarmé. I have reserved a large part of the following chapter for a fuller discussion of Gide's involvement in and contribution to the Symbolist movement.

Gide was an introverted child and adolescent raised in a wealthy and liberal Protestant family surrounded by women. His father died when he was a young child and his mother subsequently uprooted her little family of two several times before finally returning to Paris to settle when young André was fifteen. André's secondary education came to an abrupt halt because of 'nervous disorders' when he was thirteen and attending school in Montpellier. These problems were to prevent him from returning to a regular classroom for six years. In the meantime he had a series of tutors whom he describes in unflattering terms in his autobiography. The last two years of this six year hiatus he spent working assiduously with several tutors at the Pension Keller, a Protestant boarding school that is obviously the model for the Pension Vedel in Les Faux-Monnayeurs. He managed to catch up with his former classmates in time to join them in 1887 for his Rhétorique at the Ecole Alsacienne, a private lay lycée in Paris. Gide could hardly be considered a representative product of the Republican school system.

However, it is certain that the Gide family, without being fervently partisan, sympathized with the Republican government, as did many liberal Protestants at the time. In Si le grain ne meurt we find several references to a single newspaper in the Gide household, Le Temps, an anti-clerical, Protestant weekly that strongly supported government policy. Gide writes

Si nous allions voir une exposition de tableaux--et nous ne manquions aucune de celles que Le Temps voulait bien nous signaler--ce n'était jamais sans emporter le numéro du journal qui en parlait, ni sans relire sur place les appréciations du critique, par grand peur d'admirer de travers, ou de n'admirer pas du tout. (OC XIII, p.211)

The principal organ of the Republican government served then as a mediator of cultural values for the Gides.

In another reference to Le Temps Gide recounts a sequence of events that came from an article in the paper. Having read an article concerning reports of moral turpitude in a small street near the Pension Keller, André's mother warns him to avoid the street. André, for unexplained reasons, suspects that his best friend may have frequented this place and is so overwrought that when he finally confronts his friend Bernard, who seems unaware of the existence of any foul play on the street, André breaks down in tears, begging his friend not to go there. The reasons behind such an extreme reaction are more a result of the young Gide's vivid imagination than of the newspaper article itself, but the reference is significant. (Once again this memory finds its way into Les Faux-Monnayeurs in two different scenes involving Bernard, Olivier and Georges.) Besides being a cultural mediator, Le Temps was a moral watchdog. Furthermore, he frequently listened to Sunday sermons by a Protestant pastor who was the father of the

editor of Le Temps. (OC XIII, p.240-241) Jean Delay tells us that Gide even participated in a pro-Ferry demonstration while attending the Ecole Alsacienne, though he further states that Gide was rather indifferent to politics.³² The point here is not to determine whether Gide was a partisan or not, but to portray the subtle influences in his environment.

Gide mentions a Cours de littérature dramatique by Saint-Marc-Girardin that he and his mother used to read aloud, a chapter at a time, during the year before he entered the Pension Keller. He also writes several interesting pages about his first memories of his father's library, which he describes as a sanctus sanctorum full of mysterious works in Latin and Greek, law books and great classics in beautiful bindings. But the ones he chose to read were the small volumes of poetry. He particularly liked Victor Hugo and Théophile Gautier, whose work had achieved great prestige in those days, though Gautier's sensuality caused Gide some embarrassment to read in front of his mother. He discovered the Greeks through translations by the Parnassien poet Leconte de Lisle: ". . . les Grecs, qui eurent sur mon esprit une influence décisive." (OC XIII, p.262) He developed a great passion for Greek literature and mythology equalled only by his passion for the Bible; the esthetic feeling evoked by the first was difficult to distinguish from the religious fervor he felt while reading

the Scriptures: ". . . l'art et la religion en moi dévotieusement s'épousait et je goûtais ma plus parfaite extase au plus fondu de leur accord." (OC XIII, p.265) He also enjoyed the poetry of Heinrich Heine, first in translation and then in the original, and that of the Parnassien poets Sully Prudhomme and François Coppée.

One may assume that Gide gained a familiarity with the French tradition during his Rhétorique. He speaks of early attempts to write poetry but found his verses to be awkward and "à la manière de Sully Prudhomme." (OC XIII, p.266) He progressively gave more attention to writing prose and, as he entered his year of philosophy at the Lycée Henri IV, he began to write his Cahiers d'André Walter. This book literally overflows with references to Greek and Latin classics, to German and English authors and to a panoply of French writers.

But as he entered his class in philosophy, he happened upon Schopenhauer's Le Monde comme représentation et comme volonté which he read and reread (OC XIII, p.296), adopting Schopenhauer's subjectivist and vitalist ideas for his own credo. Though he claims later to have rid himself of Schopenhauer's influence, in favor of Spinoza, Leibnitz, Descartes and Nietzsche, the influence is evident in his early writings. In discussing, ironically, his intellectual pose in the Symbolist salons, he says: ". . . je tenais pour 'contingent' . . . tout ce qui n'était pas 'absolu'" and

attributes this statement to the influence of the German philosopher. (OC XIII, p.321) At another moment, when questioned by an insistant colleague at a Symbolist gathering as to the 'formula' which would guide his future work, Gide finally responded impatiently, "Nous devons tous représenter," a statement that was later to appear in the mouth of one of his characters. (OC XIII, p.332)

Schopenhauer's influence on French literature of the Third Republic was ambiguous. There were echoes of his thought in such varied writers as Taine, Brunetière, Claude Bernard and Paul Bourget. Neo-Kantians such as Renouvier found much to agree with in this German idealism

A ceux que la foi et la contemplation
esthétique ne réussissaient plus à apaiser,
s'offrait une doctrine de renoncement et de
purification, celle de Schopenhauer . . . 33

Brunetière, for instance was greatly influenced by Schopenhauer and Darwin. He shared the former's fundamental pessimism and belief in the perversity of human nature; but their most fundamental accord was on the dogma of original sin.

Le dogme du péché originel et de la
rédemption par la souffrance est la clef de voûte
de la philosophie morale et sociale de Brunetière.
Ce dogme est le seul qui soit respecté par
Schopenhauer, qui le considère comme la pierre
angulaire du christianisme. 34

Paul Bourget often quotes the German philosopher in his Essais de psychologie contemporain, particularly drawn to Schopenhauer's notion that the material world is only a projection of man's will and his radical idealism has much to do with Bourget's development of the psychological novel at the end of the century. Bourget approved of Schopenhauer's aversion to democracy as being hostile to the superior individual and he believed that superior men, disgusted by vulgarity, should withdraw into contemplation and mark their disdain for the common man. The young French writer was also drawn to the irrationalist pessimism of Schopenhauer and used it in his critique of scientism.

Devant la banqueroute finale de la
connaissance scientifique, beaucoup d'âmes
tomberont dans un désespoir comparable à celui
qui aurait saisi Pascal, s'il eût été privé de
la foi.³⁵

Bourget played an active role in the struggle against naturalism in favor of analytical novels and paved the way for the psychological novel. In fact, he, along with Anatole France, Pierre Loti and Maurice Barrés, were to be recognized as the new masters of the novel in the early 1900s.

Gide's first publication was an article entitled "Notes de la Bretagne" in a small literary journal, La Wallonie.

It was a short subjectivist sketch that reveals more about its author than about the French province. It was drawn from notes Gide took while writing his first novel, Les Cahiers d'André Walter, in an isolated provincial cottage. This work was originally published in a very limited edition in 1891 by the Librairie de l'Art Indépendant in Paris as the posthumous work of André Walter. There was a preface by a friend of the defunct author, Pierre Chrysis (pseudonym for Pierre Louÿs, Gide's best friend), though within a year it was generally known that Gide himself was the author. At times overwhelmingly maudlin, this novel is nevertheless fascinating for its interesting form, the weaving together of dialogues, reflective monologues, descriptions, letter fragments, literary and biblical quotes, poems and prayers, all in diary entries of a young novelist who is writing a novel about a young novelist. There are numerous references to this novel that André Walter is writing, Allain including a long theoretical passage in the "Cahier Noir," though we never actually read any fragments of this novel.

In his summary biography of André Walter, Pierre Chrysis includes this statement: "Il parlait quelquefois d'un livre qu'il voulait faire: oeuvre étrange, 'scientifique et passionnée,' disait-il." (OC I, p.xviii) Within the text of diary entries are innumerable references to literary and philosophical texts, classic and modern, French and foreign. For example, this passage taken from the

early pages of the first part, the "Cahier Blanc," in which André Walter speaks of his literary inspiration

Puis avec les ambitions révélées, ce fut Vigny,
Baudelaire, --Flaubert, l'ami toujours souhaité
. . . Les subtilités rhétoriques des Goncourts
affilaient notre esprit; Stendhal le faisait plus
alerte, et plus ergoteur . . ." (OC I, p.33)

However, the work most often cited by far is the Bible, a continual source of consolation and inspiration for the protagonist, in the throes of a spiritual crisis which eventually degenerates into madness (fièvre cérébrale) and finally death, leaving his work unfinished. Gide tells us that he had eliminated about half the references to the Bible in his final version on the advice of his friend and mentor Emile Verhaeren. (OC XIII, p.310) André Walter is very much a Romantic hero in the tradition of Werther or René and this is indeed a Bildungsroman in which we follow the author through his spiritual and emotional crises. But it is as if a Romantic archetype were placed in a world of symbols where passion is not so much an effect of the senses as of thought images. In a phrase redolent of Schopenhauer, André Walter writes: "L'Ame, c'est en nous la Volonté Aimante." (OC I, p.57) The Bible serves him in the first part in his struggle to resolve his ambivalent passion for Emmanuelle. The second part, following the death of his mother and his subsequent self-exile to the countryside to

write, is preceded by this phrase from Corinthians V, 16:
 "Ainsi, dès maintenant, nous ne connaissons plus personne-- selon la chair." (OC I, p.92) André Walter retires to the countryside and gradually withdraws into his own mind, living a studious life of abnegation. The references to other characters and events are gradually reduced to a minimum and the introspection becomes more metaphysical.
 "Pas un événement . . . la vie toujours intime--tout s'est joué dans l'âme, il n'en a rien paru." (OC I, p.xvii)

Schopenhauer is also evoked repeatedly to justify the author's fascination with himself, the subject: "Ce qui connaît tout et n'est connu de personne, c'est le Sujet. Il est donc le support du monde. . ." (OC I, p.100) This extreme idealism is intentionally nourished in search of a vision that goes beyond the materiality of objects. André Walter writes: "Perdre le sentiment de son rapport avec les choses, de sorte que la représentation se dégage toute pure et qu'aucune connaissance extérieure ne distraie de la connaissance intuitive et de la vision commencée tout à coup ne s'éveille." (OC I, p.114) His three catch words are 'la vie spontanée,' 'la connaissance intuitive' and 'la foi.' (OC I, p.112)

Finally, though we never actually see the novel, Allain, that André Walter is writing, we have ample reason to believe that it also concerns a spiritual quest that resembles perfectly that of its author. They become rivals

in a macabre race toward death. By the end of the text, the author confuses himself with Allain as both succumb to madness. Earlier, in a long footnote presented as notes for the composition of Allain, we find other similarities between the novel he is writing and the novel we are reading. "Un personnage seulement . . . ou plutôt son cerveau, n'est que le lieu commun où le drame se livre, le champ clos où les adversaires s'assailent." (OC I, p.95) These adversaries are not two separate passions, but two aspects of a single passion, 'l'ame et la chair.' It is from the struggle between the spirit and the flesh that the novel is created. He also calls this the struggle between materialism and idealism. "Non point une vérité de réalisme, contingente fatalement; mais une vérité théorique, absolue (du moins humainement)." (OC I, p.94) He wants to create an ideal world, ". . . la vie phénoménale absente,--seul les noumènes . . ." by transposing Spinoza's ethical principles into an esthetic for the novel, ". . . les lignes géométriques. Un roman c'est un théorème." (OC I, p.94)

Les Cahiers d'André Walter, for all its excesses, represents, in kernel form, esthetic preoccupations that Gide would go on to elaborate for the rest of his career. The radical subjectivity and idealism were subsequently to undergo considerable alteration, but the problem of the relation between material reality and its representation in a text and the problems of narrative voice and self

awareness would remain. André Walter is an odd work with its episodic narration and shifts of narrative voice, using letter fragments in which dialogues are reported that in turn elucidate some other part of the text. This structural play, putting a conversation inside a diary entry inside the novel within the context of a false preface, is a narrative procedure that Gide continued to employ. We will in fact point to similar narrative strategies, though more subtly executed, thirty-five years later in his Les Faux-Monnayeurs. The diary form gives an impression of linear development, but the diary fragments as presented seem to represent more an absorption of a discontinuous reality in which memory and especially other texts blend the past into the present, each fragment subject to abstraction in the present moment of the diary writing. The narrator is continually looking backward, analyzing past events and drawing general conclusions about himself, his relation to human nature and to literature. But the journal form is by nature a deferred presence, that is to say, the narrator's presence in the first person as writing subject and his presence as object of the analysis only coincide with one another through the abstraction of the past into a web of meaning for the narrator's personal salvation. It is the organizing principle of his project, to write Allain, which gives the events of his life meaning.

Jean Rousset, in his brilliant work L'Intérieur et l'extérieur, comments on Gide's radical subjectivity in the young author's Notes de Bretagne, written during the composition of Les Cahiers d'André Walter

Voilà, me semble-t-il, l'essentiel: il est dans le caractère radicalement subjectif de ces visions. Le rapport entre le spectacle et le spectateur tend à se renverser . . .³⁶

In André Walter the narrator gradually replaces the spectacle of the material world with the spectacle of himself, his inner world. He says, "les choses deviennent vraies: il suffit qu'on les pense. --C'est en nous qu'est la réalité; notre esprit crée ses Vérités." (OC I, p.54) This radical denial of exterior reality leads to a paradoxical negation of the subject that only attains the purity it is seeking through the death of the protagonist and of his double. The conclusion of the text corresponds with the death of its author; the text then is the image of the author's life.

A few years later Gide was to write in his Journal,

On peut dire alors ceci, que je vois comme une sincérité renversée (de l'artiste): Il doit, non pas raconter sa vie telle qu'il l'a vécue, mais la vivre telle qu'il la racontera. (JAG I, p.29)

The text is, in this sense, a higher reality; it is the ideal that governs his actions. In the same 1892 entry in his Journal Gide says "Toute notre vie s'emploie à tracer de nous-mêmes un ineffaçable portrait." (JAG I, p.29) The portrait we see of André Walter is a composite portrait of his soul, and inevitably, the soul and will are all that remain as his body and his reason succumb to the 'fièvre cérébrale.'

The young André Gide saw his first novel as a response to a pressing need of his generation; in fact, he states in Si le grain ne meurt that he expected great success as this work seemed to him to correspond to Melchior de Vogüé's call for innovation and to Paul Desjardin's Devoir présent. (OC XIII, p.304) He was bitterly disappointed by the absence of critical acclaim, not to say the indifference, of the large majority of his contemporaries. However, he took solace in the praise of the 'happy few.' Pierre Louÿs lavished enthusiastic praise on his friend's work and it was read and admired within a small circle of habitués at Mallarmé's 'cours du mardi soir.' They admired his style and his rigorous use of language in his effort toward perfect limpidity of expression. Gide later said of his Cahiers d'André Walter, ". . . je m'essayais à un style qui prétendait à une plus secrète et plus essentielle beauté." (JAG I, p.347)

Gide began writing for various literary journals over the coming years as a critic and essayist. The previously mentioned "Notes de Bretagne" was published, still under the pseudonym of André Walter, in Albert Mockel's literary magazine Wallonie and he finally published, under his own name, the Traité du Narcisse in Tristan Bernard's Entretiens politiques et littéraires in 1892. The Traité du Narcisse, with a subtitle "Théorie du Symbole", reads like a manifesto of the Symbolist movement, of which Gide had become a part. Indeed certain critics see it as a major statement of Symbolist esthetics. The following chapter will delve more deeply into Gide's participation in the Symbolist movement.

NOTES

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3. Auguste Comte, Cours de philosophie positive, Paris, Hachette, 1927, p.39.
4. Lalo, p.xiv.
5. Theodore Zeldin, France 1848-1945, vol.II, London, Clarendon Press, 1977, p.145.
6. Ibid., p.155.
7. Ibid., p.181.
8. Ibid., p.176.
9. Ibid., p.173.
10. Ibid., p.178.

11. Ibid., p.292.
12. Ibid., p.121.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p.123.
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CHAPTER 3

THE FOUNDATIONS AND FLUIDITY OF GIDE'S ESTHETIC

The Symbolist Movement

Although it is evident from remarks in Si le grain ne meurt, in Delay's biography and in Gide's early journal entries that he was an avid reader of novels and philosophy, his first love was poetry. "Mais en ce temps-là, je n'avais de regards que pour l'âme, de goût que pour la poésie." (OC VII, p.316) Gide became friends with José-Maria Hérédia through his friend Pierre Louÿs and spent his Saturday evenings at Hérédia's home in the company of many poets and artists whom he also saw on Tuesday evenings at Mallarmé's apartment.

The formative influence of this loosely knit avant-garde group, and most particularly Stéphane Mallarmé, on Gide's career can hardly be overstated. This is not to say that the young Gide was a sycophant who blindly followed his guru, because he was an active participant in the elaboration of the Symbolist esthetic and was later to reject many of the idealist and hermetic notions that characterized this movement. His early association with this

milieu was more of a catalyst that liberated him from any realist penchant and reinforced his classical belief in the primacy of style and the word. A closer examination of this period will clarify some of the major and recurrent themes in Gide's work.

The Symbolist movement derived its name from an 1886 article published by the poet Jean Moreas in the Figaro. Most of the journals and magazines called it the 'école décadente.'¹ Neither of these expressions truly characterizes the movement which, in Gide's words, "se dessinait en réaction contre le réalisme, avec un remous contre le Parnasse également." (OC VII, p.321) The Parnassians, particularly in the person of Leconte de Lisle, espoused a poetry of detachment and total objectivity. But their scientific pretensions in defining their esthetic ideas were often as categorical as those of the Naturalists. The Symbolists opposed the rigorous precision in the description of objects and the pristine clarity of ideas in the Parnassian esthetic. They put greater emphasis on fleeting feeling or impressions arising from the subconscious.² They looked back to Baudelaire for their vision of art.

Qu'est-ce que l'art pur suivant la conception moderne? C'est créer une magie suggestive contenant à la fois l'objet et le sujet, le monde extérieur à l'artiste et l'artiste lui-même.³

Baudelaire is commonly regarded as a poet with one foot in the past, Romanticism, and another in modernist idealism. This dualism is certainly evident in much of his work as he attempts to reconcile the material world with the spiritual. In dark moments, his nostalgia for a lost paradise of natural harmony and purity gives way to irrational pessimism about the oppressive world of material existence. He escaped this dilemma through an abstract idealism in which the harmonious paradise could be recreated through art, or rather, intuited through the mediation of art. But his yearning for the sensuality of the material world constantly crept back to burst his spiritual bubble.

The Symbolists, particularly Mallarmé, shared no such ambivalence concerning the material world; they magnified the idealism into a credo of pure art. Michel Décaudin, in his Crise des valeurs symbolistes, says that art, in the second half of the nineteenth century became a moral system, a religion and a metaphysics:

. . . refus du monde positiviste, des sollicitations politiques ou sociales, des réalités matérielles, des conventions et des contraintes de la vie policée. . . on affirme que l'art est nécessairement idéaliste.⁴

Gide adhered totally to this conception of art during his early association with the Symbolists but gradually began to nuance his ideas as shall be shown below.

Camille Mauclair describes the symbol as, "l'expression d'une pensée par un être, un objet, un acte n'intervenant pas pour eux-mêmes, mais seulement pour cette expression."⁵ Mauclair goes on to enumerate the means of expressing these ideas--allegory, transposition, allusion and all other procedures of synthesis--which leads him to conclude that Symbolism was more a movement of forms than of ideas.⁶

Mauclair is generally correct as concerns the majority of symbolist poets such as Verlaine, R  gnier, Verhaeren and Vi  l  -Griffin among others, but his statement is misleading for the more complex case of St  phane Mallarm  . Yuen Park, in his L'Id  e chez Mallarm  , points precisely to the difficulty one has in separating idea and form in Mallarm  's poetry. "La forme pure est ce qui n'existe pas. Elle est le n  ant en tant qu'absence du concret."⁷ Park further says that Mallarm  's poetry strives toward absolute purity, but the absolute is not in the realm of truth in a moral sense; rather it is in the realm of order in a geometric sense.

It is certainly this rigorous approach to language that made his poetry so hermetic, to the point of being incomprehensible for most of his contemporaries. Anatole France, as editor of Parnasse contemporaine, originally refused to publish "L'Apr  s-midi d'un faune" because he was afraid of seeming ridiculous. Mallarm   categorically rejected the ideas of clarity and precision advocated by

Leconte de Lisle and his 'cénacle.' In Divagations he writes,

. . . la poésie est l'expression par le langage humain ramené à son rythme essentiel du sens mystérieux de l'existence: elle doue ainsi d'authenticité notre séjour et constitue la seule tâche spirituelle.⁸

Art, in effect, replaced religion, or perhaps constituted its highest form of expression for Mallarmé.

It is essential for the discussion here to juxtapose the great poet's ideas to those of his young disciple Gide whose first work published under his own name, Le Traité du Narcisse, bears the subtitle "Théorie du symbole." To explain the symbol, Gide has recourse to Greek and Christian myths--Narcissus and the Garden of Eden. He rewrites the myth of Narcissus, beginning in a time before the hero had found his own image. "En la monotonie inutile de l'heure il s'inquiète, et son coeur incertain s'interroge." (III,p.3) He leaves the monotony to search for his own image and stops along the banks of the River of Time, "fatale et illusoire rivière où les années passent et s'écoulent." (III,p.3) Narcissus looks into the present of events flowing past; he can see their virtual presence forming in the future, upstream, before they rush by him downstream into the past. But this too soon becomes monotonous and Narcissus realizes that it is always the same forms that pass by; . . . l'élan

du flot seul les différencie." (III,p.4) This leads him to conclude that they all must come from some paradisiac and crystalline "forme première perdue," and Narcissus then dreams of paradise.

The Garden of Eden is a place of perfect harmony: "Tout s'y cristallisait en une floraison nécessaire." (III,p.5) Alone within this garden is Adam; ". . . pour lui, par lui, les formes apparaissent." (III,p.5) But Adam tires of being the privileged and eternal spectator and desires, like Narcissus, to see his own image, "Car, c'est un esclavage enfin, si l'on n'ose risquer un geste, sans crever tout l'harmonie." (III,p.6) In a rebellious gesture of free will, Adam breaks a branch of Ygdrasil, "l'arbre logarithmique," and in so doing destroys the harmonious order of paradise, forever lost. Henceforth man will only know paradise through the words of the prophets and

. . . des poètes, que voici, qui recueilleront pieusement les feuillets déchirés du Livre immémorial où se lisait la vérité qu'il faut connaître. (III,p.7)

Paradise is total harmony of form; it exists beneath the appearances inside of objects as each salt has within it the archetype of its crystal. Gide writes in a footnote,

Les vérités demeurent derrière les formes--
Symboles. Tout phénomène est le symbole d'une

vérité. Son seul devoir est qu'il la manifeste.
Son seul péché: qu'il se préfère. (III,p.8)

It is likely that Gide drew these last two ideas from the German philosopher Schopenhauer--that the will by necessity manifests itself and that the poet must suspend his own subjective will.

L'artiste, le savant, ne doit pas se préférer
à la Vérité qu'il veut dire: voilà toute sa
morale; ni le mot ni la phrase, à l'idée qu'il
veut montrer: je dirais presque, que c'est là
toute l'esthétique. (III,p.8)

But if the poet and scientist are both looking for these primary forms from which all sense emanates, the latter is limited by his meticulous inductive method, by his need for innumerable examples, and he stops at the appearance of things. The scientist, obsessed with certainty, refuses to guess intuitively. The poet intuits the archetype of an object--the symbol--behind the appearances. For Gide the work of art is like a crystal,

. . . paradis partiel où l'idée refléurit en sa
pureté supérieure . . . où les phrases rythmiques
et sûres, symboles encore, mais symboles purs, où
les paroles se font transparentes et révélatrices.
(III,p.10)

It is obvious that Gide was greatly influenced by Mallarmé's teachings, along with those of Schopenhauer.

Gide's "poète pieux" in Narcisse answers the call of the master's "tâche spirituelle;" and Gide's "phrases rythmiques et sûres" correspond to the previously quoted phrase from Divagations, "rythme essentiel du sens mystérieux de l'existence." Undoubtedly Gide's idea of spirituality is more properly religious than Mallarmé's metaphysical spirituality. There is a flavor of Calvinism in the crucial role Gide gives to Adam's free will in the preordained unity of paradise and the poet becomes a tragic figure in the Romantic tradition as a demi-god mediator between man and paradise. Furthermore, Gide's notion of the transparency of words is another Romantic notion of immanence to which Mallarmé surely would not subscribe. However, many critics, then as now, view Narcisse as a primary theoretical document of the Symbolist movement despite certain criticisms proffered at the time of its publication, most notably by Gide's best friend, Pierre Louÿs, in his Léda ou la louange des Bienheureuses Ténèbres. Beyond certain differences on a theoretical level, Louÿs as well as Gide's other Symbolist friends admired the Traité du Narcisse as a beautiful work of art.⁹

George Lukacs, in his Théorie du roman, briefly discusses the Symbolist movement and the principles of abstract idealism it embodied. In an attempt to distinguish between Romanticism and Symbolism, in that order, he says

Là, on exigeait du monde extérieur qu'il se recrée à neuf sur le modèle des idéaux; ici, c'est une intériorité qui, s'achevant elle-même comme création littéraire, exige du monde extérieur qu'il s'offre à elle comme matière adéquate à son autostructuration.¹⁰

This relationship to the exterior world as raw material for the autostructuration of the literary work is a crucial notion that Gide retained from his Symbolist association and I shall have occasion to return to this point later in the discussion of Les Faux-Monnayeurs. But Gide owes more to Mallarmé than this basic vision of the artist's relationship to the exterior world; under his tutelage Gide came to appreciate the importance of language itself and of the speaking subject.

Mallarmé, perhaps more than any other poet, believed that the subject of all poems was poetry. His poems are an attempt to reverse the process of the objectivation of words. He undermines and obliterates the denotative relationships between words and objects to create a higher meaning. In Maurice Blanchot's words, "Le langage est ce qui détruit le monde pour le faire renaître à l'état de sens, de valeurs signifiées."¹¹ This idealist notion of language is best reflected in a famous quote from the preface Mallarmé wrote for René Ghil's Traité du verbe

Je dis une fleur! et hors de l'oubli où ma
voix relègue aucun contour, en tant que quelque
chose d'autre que les calices sus, musicalement se

lève, idée même et suave, l'absente de tous
bouquets.¹²

It is this absence of the concrete that Mallarmé seeks through the form of poetic expression. This abstract idealism resembles closely some of Hegel's pronouncements on poetry.¹³ But Mallarmé was a poet and so shifted his emphasis from objective reason to a subjective sensitivity. In Mallarmé's poetry, the subject becomes an integral part of the texture, not as an end in itself, but as a universal subject, a totalizing means of expressing the ideal. Order, says Mallarmé, "est saisi non par la raison mais par la sensibilité . . . le Beau n'est que l'ordre immanent de la totalité de l'univers."¹⁴ Mallarmé, like a jet pilot breaking the sound barrier, pushed the envelope of language and form to the limit. To quote from Lukacs once again,

. . . l'immanence du sens telle que l'exige la forme naît justement du fait d'aller jusqu'au bout, et sans aucun ménagement, dans la mise à nu de son absence.¹⁵

The lofty heights of Mallarmean idealism fascinated Gide and he continued to admire the master's ". . . manifestation tranquille d'une beauté morale hors du monde . . .;" (OC II, p.454) but the young author couldn't maintain such an ascetic view and soon, under the pressure of his own experience, was to modify his position. Certain crucial

ideas remained, however, particularly the notion of critical distance and dialectical couples of subject/object and of presence/absence. The subtlety of Mallarmé's dictum, "Peindre, non la chose, mais l'effet qu'elle produit,"¹⁶ was to remain a point of reference for Gide's view of the suggestive magic of words, the importance of form and the general problematic of language. I shall return to Gide's conception of form and the problem of subjectivity in language below.

It must be said that Gide was not particularly happy with his chosen vocation as a poet, if one is to believe his retrospective statements in Si le grain ne meurt. He could not remain content with the contemplative peace of Narcissus, seeing only his own reflection in the people and objects that surrounded him. He writes,

. . . l'ami qu'il m'eût fallu, c'est quelqu'un qui m'eût appris à m'intéresser à autrui et qui m'eût sorti de moi-même: un romancier. (OC VII, p.316)

Gide became friends with the English novelist Oscar Wilde in 1891 and Wilde certainly did much to open Gide up to himself and to others, though it isn't certain that this was the friend he had in mind.

If Gide's association with the Symbolist group and particularly Mallarmé was to be a determining influence on his literary career, the influence of Schopenhauer and later

of Nietzsche was equally strong and perhaps accounts for some of his differences with others in the Symbolist group. He writes at one point that the guests at Mallarmé's Tuesday gatherings were enthralled with Plato, whereas he considered Schopenhauer to be far superior. For the German philosopher, an artist is concerned not with action but with contemplation or what he termed will-less perception. From the vantage point of this detachment, all esthetic judgements would be disinterested and beauty sufficient unto itself, exterior to the cause/effect reasoning of conventional perception. Schopenhauer also held that there is a shift in the subject's mode of perception in relation to an esthetic object and consequently a shift in the object perceived. The esthetic object is exterior to normal spatio-temporally and causally related things and events. The esthetic observer is presented with, "permanent essential forms of the world and all its phenomena,"¹⁷ which he calls archetypal forms. Schopenhauer approved Kant's separation of noumena (things in themselves) from phenomena (one's perception of things) and agreed that one could only know things through their appearances. But he differs from Kant in that he proposes two separate modes of self-awareness. One is awareness of self as a physical entity occupying space, enduring through time and responding causally to stimuli. The second is the awareness of an active being whose overt behavior is an expression of will. He refused

the Cartesian dualism of body and mind, seeing instead the body as merely an objectification of the will. Though Gide was later to renounce these beliefs in favor of a more materialist doctrine, Schopenhauer's early influence, particularly regarding the double nature of the subject, was to remain. Nietzsche, another disciple of Schopenhauer, helped Gide overcome his fascination with the author of The World As Will and Representation while reinforcing his vitalist penchant.

It is always difficult to assess the precise influence that the ideas of one man produce in another. More often than not the new ideas are integrated into an existing framework of ideas and, under the influence of the personality of the reader and of the events of the time, are selected and modified to conform as much as they exert pressure to change. Gide writes, in 1892,

. . . chaque pensée nouvelle, en se déplaçant, remue toutes les autres. . . tout se confond dans ma tête et . . . chaque concept s'accroche un peu à tous les autres. (JAG I, p.30)

We shall return to Nietzsche's place in Gide's web of beliefs after a discussion of the sophisticated irony of Paludes and what has been termed Gide's 'materialist conversion.'¹⁸

Paludes and the Critique of Idealism

Gide maintained the greatest respect for Mallarmé and for his other friends in the Symbolist group, but he gradually became critical of the closed circle they represented, resisting exterior influences and making a cult of idealist beauty. His novel Paludes, published in 1895, was a reaction against the egocentrism of the Parisian milieu and many of its characters are easily recognizable as members of the group.

But this satire is in good humor and, although Gide mocks the pretensions of many of his colleagues, his most biting satire is reserved for his own alter ego, the nameless narrator. There is a significant shift in tone from Gide's earlier works and Gide was later to classify Paludes as a *sotie*. The original subtitle for this work was "Traité de la Contingence" and it was meant to be a complement to his Narcisse. In the intervening period Gide had undergone a radical change; his vision was different

Tout au plus pouvais-je pardonner aux autres de ne pas reconnaître que j'étais changé . . . j'avais à dire des choses nouvelles, et je ne pouvais plus leur parler. J'eusse voulu leur persuader et leur délivrer mon message, mais aucun d'eux ne se penchait pour m'écouter. Ils continuaient de vivre . . . (OC VII, p.575)

To show this change in himself and the new ideas he wanted to express, he conceived a different form of prose. Paludes is a very lively, amusing and ironic narrative. The narrator exaggerates his obsessions and is self-deprecatory. An analysis of the structure of this novel, particularly as regards the levels of irony, will be useful for the discussion of Gide's development as a novelist.

Paludes, in its broad structural outline, closely resembles the earlier Cahiers d'André Walter. It is also written in journal form, it contains letter fragments and poems, it is open-ended and, in a strange sense, it also recounts the spiritual quest of a young novelist writing a novel. But between these two novels, similar in form, lies the distance of ironic consciousness. One finds the character Emmanuelle from André Walter, a very serious, spiritual companion, metamorphosed into Angèle, a lively and frivolous companion. The earlier sedentary and introspective narrator has become a peripatetic extrovert. Moreover, while in André Walter there are really only two essential characters who rarely speak, in Paludes there are many and dialogues abound. If André Walter's dilemma was wholly within his soul and apparent to no one, the narrator of Paludes makes a point of baring his soul publicly.

The journal form used in André Walter becomes an arbitrary convention in Paludes, covering six consecutive days, each preceded by a specific title, forming chapters

more than journal entries. Furthermore, these chapters qua journal entries are not simply accounts of the events, encounters and readings of the day with appropriate abstraction, but truly narrative units with reported dialogues, character analysis and descriptions, all of which concern, directly or indirectly, the novel in progress, Paludes, which is, in effect, the novel we are reading. Indeed at one point on the last day, after what appears to be an extemporaneous affabulation, the narrator preempts Angèle's comment saying, "Et ne me dites pas que je devrais mettre cela dans Paludes. D'abord, ça y est déjà." (III,p.125)

The narrator promotes our confusion of the two Paludes, the one we are reading and the one he is writing, by constant references to things he has seen, heard or just written that should be included in Paludes; and of course, in a very obvious sense, they are. Yet the two texts differ in a few very important aspects. The frame narrative is written in the first person while the fragmentary narrative within is told in the third person. The first person narrator has no name, but the protagonist of the third person narrative is named Tityre, a character borrowed from Virgil's Aeneid. Tityre lives in the middle of a swamp, surrounded by a landscape that is as monotonous as his contemplative existence. Tityre adapts to the monotony and is content.

How completely different the setting of the frame narrative--an urban landscape full of movement and lively conversation. The narrator never seems to stop moving, from his apartment to the street, to Angèle's apartment, to someone's salon, and back again to his own apartment. There is a constant stream of brief visits by or to the narrator and there are constant digressions from his discourse. However, both versions of Paludes, for all their differences, give the same impression--the inutility of action. Despite the agitation of the frame narrative, the narrator's claim that he writes in order to act and his exhortations to his colleagues to change their habits, what we see is an endless repetition of the same actions and words. The story of Tityre is a transposition of the vicious circle of the narrator's existence in the literary scene into a landscape of monotony.

The narrator writes down an agenda each evening of things to do the following day, but his lists are bizarre in that they rarely involve concrete actions and tend to accentuate the narrator's objectification of self (*s'étonner de, penser à, s'inquiéter de, tâcher d'avoir*). He begins the second day by looking at his list of things to do and reflects that keeping a list of things to do, which he can eventually compare to a list of things done, will give him, "le sentiment du devoir." (III,p.96) Further, keeping a list of things he should have done will, at the end of the year,

give him "des idées morales." (III,p.96) This said, he has no compunction about ignoring items on the list or modifying them to fit his impulses. The distance between his intentions and his actions sets the text in an ironic mode which is made all the more obvious by the triviality of his agenda items and his lengthy moral rationalization of the function of such lists.

So he finds written in his agenda for the second day, "tâcher de se lever à six heures," and beside it he writes, "levé à sept." (III,p.96) He calls the difference 'l'imprévu négatif.' Two days later, his agenda qua moral calendar reaches absurd proportions. He arises at eight, sees on the agenda "tâcher de se lever à six heures," crosses it out and writes instead, "tâcher de se lever à onze heures," then goes back to bed. Unable to sleep, he nevertheless refuses out of self-discipline to arise before the newly appointed hour. (III,p.128)

He also finds noted in his list for the second day that he should think about the individuality of his friend Richard and says, illogically, "Je m'apprêtais à penser à l'individualité de Richard." (III,p.97) He begins by pulling out a file that he keeps on Richard who, at that very moment, arrives on an impromptu visit, giving rise to such an absurd utterance as, "Ah, cher Richard, j'allais penser à vous ce matin." (III,p.99) The two of them then proceed to have the very same conversation that we just read in the

narrator's notes on Richard. It is as if he were called to life by the text to concretize the narrator's incongruous phrases, giving an impression of repetitive absurdity.

Richard's presence quickly turns out to be more of a hindrance to the narrator than a help, as he writes, "J'étais légèrement ennuyé ne pouvant bien penser aux gens en leur présence." (III,p.99) This comical situation points to a serious esthetic principle, the necessary distance between the narrator and his subject. The narrator later says that the third person is the one who is absent; and subsequently, in a conversation with a group of intellectuals at Angèle's party, he defines the third person as the 'normal' man, generalized man who resembles everyone equally. In fact, this is the very subject of his novel.

Paludes . . . c'est l'histoire du terrain neutre, ce qui est à tout le monde . . . l'histoire de la troisième personne, celle dont on parle--qui vit en chacun et qui ne meurt pas avec nous. (III,p.116)

Tityre is the essence of this third person--faceless, malleable, content and absent (he never speaks). The narrator tells Angèle that Tityre is modeled after Richard, but their only resemblance is their passive acceptance of a monotonous life and, from a narrative point of view, their necessary absence. Gide skillfully returns to this

phenomenological leitmotif of presence/absence throughout the novel.

There is another playful reference to repetition and inutility in a scene that takes place just before Angèle's party in the stairwell of her building. As the narrator sits on a bench composing a letter, the man to whom it is addressed arrives and, without having read the note, sits down to write a response. Their first exchange concerns the idea of 'ignorance is bliss,' but they draw diametrically opposed conclusions. The second exchange of notes begins, in each case, with an example of a mistranslated Latin text. But whereas the narrator uses his example to show the necessity of lucidity to achieve true happiness, his friend Martin uses his example to demystify the notion of moral necessity. Finally, in their third and last exchange, their respective notes coincide perfectly: "Plus j'y réfléchis, plus je trouve ton exemple stupide, car enfin" (III, p. 115) This unlikely parallelism of thought and expression totally undermines the seriousness of the subject--individual liberty and moral necessity. There is no progression in this dialogue of notes, only an accumulation of tangents. The first exchange of notes recalls Plato's cave: "Etre aveugle pour se croire heureux. . . . L'on ne peut se voir que malheureux," writes the narrator, to which his friend has already responded, "Etre heureux de sa cécité. . . . L'on ne peut être que malheureux de se voir."

(III,p.114) However absurd the context, this is one of the central questions of the text--the consequences of self awareness and the implications it has for the self and others. Whereas Martin argues for passive resignation, the narrator proposes freedom through an act of will. It is also an argument about the philosophical notion of contingency and the philosopher, Alexandre, arrives at the end of the exchange to say to the narrator, "Rattachez-vous à tout, Monsieur, et ne demandez pas la contingence; d'abord vous ne l'obtiendrez pas--et puis: à quoi ça vous servirait-il?" (III,p.115)

The distance between the narrator's intentions and his actions is perhaps most apparent near the end of the text when he and Angèle decide to take a trip to get away from the stagnant self-complacency of their milieu. After two days of planning and with great hopes for the curative effects of their absence, they never make it any further than the train station. But the narrator is not discouraged and rationalizes the setback into a victory

Il est assez heureux, après tout, que ce petit voyage ait raté--pouvant ainsi mieux vous instruire. . . . le plaisir que nous peut procurer un voyage n'est qu'accessoire. On voyage pour l'éducation . . . (III,p.141)

What Angèle may have learned isn't exactly clear, unless it be a general sense of resignation.

In the end, it is Hubert, the narrator's best friend, and Roland who leave on a long trip to North Africa. The narrator is left to his habits and futile repetitions. He immediately begins to worry about how he is going to replace Hubert's regular six o'clock visits and, as Paludes comes to a close, we find him once again sitting in his room as in the opening scene. A friend enters and finds him writing. When he inquires, just as in the beginning, what the narrator is writing, he is told, "J'écris Polders." (III,p.146) The whole farcical text has come back to its point of departure, leaving the reader with a feeling of infinite repetition.

Paludes is, to say the least, an enigmatic text, full of linguistic and logical paradoxes. By constantly undermining the reliability of the narrator, Gide has decentered the text. The reader is invited to find his own truth between the lines. Indeed, in a short preface to Paludes, the author writes,

. . . si nous savions ce que nous voulions dire, nous ne savons pas si nous ne disions que cela.-- On dit toujours plus que CELA.--Et ce qui surtout m'y intéresse, c'est ce que j'y ai mis sans le savoir,--cette part d'inconscient, que je voudrais appeler la part de Dieu. (III,p.89)

Reactions to Paludes were diverse. Claude Martin writes that, contrary to the common belief today that Gide was a relatively unknown writer until much later, Paludes

encountered considerable success and was read and commented widely, albeit in the somewhat restrained circle of the Paris literary scene.¹⁹ Gide's contemporaries were greatly impressed by this unusual and masterful farce. Camille Mauclair wrote in the Mercure de France,

. . . je crois bien que depuis Laforgue personne n'avait eu cette façon exquisement désespérée et paisiblement prêt aux larmes de trahir sa lassitude de l'ordinaire et du prévu . . .²⁰

And in an anonymous note in the Figaro of July 17, 1895, the reference is to Sterne

Fantaisie d'un esprit zélé, qui vole au-dessus de toutes choses sans s'y poser, un peu à la façon de Sterne, avec des pointes d'ironie, de critique et des élans de poète. On n'analyse guère plus un livre comme celui-là qu'on n'explique un parfum; ce sont là choses trop subtiles pour que la parole suffise à en donner l'impression.²¹

But perhaps it is Mallarmé who, in a letter to Gide, sums up best the impression left by Paludes.

Je ne fais pas allusion d'abord à votre goutte aigrette et précieuse d'ironie qui tient cent pages, elle est d'essence unique; mais autrement, l'affabulation spirituelle approche la merveille et vous avez trouvé, dans le suspens et l'à-côté, une forme qui devait se présenter et qu'on ne reprendra plus.²²

Though the critics were not equal in their praise, Paludes made a stir in the Parisian literary community and Gide's parody of the salons and cénacles was the occasion for considerable polemic. Léon Blum, whom Gide was soon to replace as literary critic for the Revue Blanche, saw in this strange novel a major statement not only of Gide's esthetic, but of a changing esthetic in his generation. He saw it as a novel heralding a new sensitivity.

Paludes, gai roman de l'ennui, livre de la richesse dans la monotonie, où l'uniformité du récit et de la pensée est variée par une incroyable abondance d'observation et d'imagination psychologique . . . Les générations changent; celle-ci n'est plus romanesque, et le récit intime et difficile de Paludes a bien pu être son Werther. Chaque jour la verra se détacher de l'homme vers la nature et vers l'idée.²³

Léon Blum astutely points to one of the major influences on Gide's esthetic at that time, Goethe, who was to remain a model for Gide's subsequent work. Blum may have found the references to Goethe in Gide's 1897 "Postface pour la deuxième édition de Paludes et pour annoncer Les Nourritures Terrestres," in which Gide, contrary to his original preface, attempts to explain the genesis and meaning of his *sotie* as a preface to his 'materialist conversion.' Gide cites both Goethe and another major influence, Leibnitz, the Eighteenth century German philosopher, author of New Essays

on Human Understanding. Paludes, we read, marked a feeling of stagnation in a closed literary milieu and a desire to

. . . bannir pour un long temps les livres, soulever les rideaux, ouvrir, briser les vitres dépolies, tout ce qui s'épaissit entre nous et l'Autre, tout ce qui ternit la nature, -- harmoniser enfin sa vie et ses pensées, selon l'optimisme éperdu où l'avaient conduit son tempérament d'abord, puis son admiration pour Goethe et la lente méditation de Leibnitz. (III, p.1476)

And in a letter to his mother shortly before the publication of Paludes, Gide recommends Goethe to her in these terms: ". . . l'extraordinaire somme de folie que cet homme raisonnable entre tous put absorber, faire sienne et neutraliser . . ." ²⁴ It is Goethe's receptivity to the world of sensations that Gide admires and would emulate. His long meditation of Leibnitz had lead him to re-evaluate the worth of an individual idea as opposed to a universal truth. In an 1894 entry in his Journal, Gide writes

Certains confondent idées et vérités (voir Leibnitz, Nouveaux Essais). Les vérités sont toujours bonnes; les idées souvent dangereuses à montrer. L'on dirait que l'idée est la tentation de sa vérité. Il n'est pas bon de tenter les autres; Dieu envoie à chacun des tentations selon sa force . . . (JAG I, p.55)

The last page of Paludes is the beginning of a playful list, for the reader, of the most remarkable phrases from

the novel. One of the two phrases cited is, "Il faut porter jusqu'à la fin toutes les idées qu'on soulève." (III,p.149) In his 1897 "Postface" Gide commented on this choice

Et voilà le sujet de mon livre. C'est l'histoire d'une idée plus que l'histoire de quoi que ce soit d'autre; c'est l'histoire de la maladie qu'elle cause dans tel esprit. (III,p.1478)

He then goes on to compare the idea to a cancer that takes over the body, to a seed that becomes a majestic tree and to the kingdom of God.

From these comments one can see that the extreme receptivity of the author to his intellectual environment gives birth to and nourishes the idea around which the text is constructed. The idea is the ordering principle that governs the logic of narrative development much more than do concerns of verisimilitude. Therefore, in Paludes, it is the logic of boredom and stagnation that dictates narrative form--repetition, digression and circularity. But one might conclude from these comments that Gide was promoting a didactic literature. To disabuse his readers of this notion he goes a step further to express an esthetic principle that was to become a trademark of Gidean irony.

J'aime aussi que chaque livre porte en lui, mais cachée, sa propre réfutation et ne s'assoie pas sur l'idée, de peur qu'on n'en voie l'autre

face. J'aime qu'il porte en lui de quoi se nier,
se supprimer lui-même . . . (III,p.1479)

It is this dialectical tension between subject and object, inscribed within the text, that gives Paludes its enigmatic quality and assures its enduring modernism beyond the topical parody of the Parisian literary milieu. To create this dialectical tension between subject and object Gide has recourse to a narrative form that he calls a "construction en abyme." He writes

J'aime assez qu'en une oeuvre d'art, on retrouve ainsi transposé, à l'échelle des personnages, le sujet même de cette oeuvre. Rien ne l'éclaire mieux et n'établit plus surement toutes les proportions de l'ensemble. (JAG I,p.41)

He gives a series of examples of this interior duplication to illustrate his idea. He mentions Memling and Quentin Metzys, whose paintings contain convex mirrors reproducing the pictorial space from within; the Velasquez painting Las Meninas, in which one sees the painter painting; literary works such as Hamlet, Wilhelm Meister and The Fall of the House of Usher, all of which contain autoreferential narratives; and his own works, André Walter, Narcisse and his most recent Tentative Amoureuse. This dialectical narrative structure now known as the mise en abyme was to become a trademark of Gide's fiction that reaches its apex

in Les Faux-Monnayeurs, thirty years later. I shall explore this narrative procedure in depth in a later chapter. Suffice it to say here that one of the primary functions that Gide ascribes to the mise en abyme is the engagement of the reader in the psychological development of the novel as a dialogic process of becoming. "Cette rétroaction du sujet sur lui-même m'a toujours tenté. C'est le roman psychologique typique." (JAG I,p.41)

In other words the structure of the work of art would, in this way, represent the structure of human consciousness --the subject's awareness of self as an object of thought. This translates as radical subjectivity in Gide's early works mentioned in the passage above. Jean Rousset says of Gide's Narcisse, for instance

Ce Narcisse gidien est lui aussi aquarelliste; son regard compose les miroitements colorés qu'il projète sur la toile vide du monde . . . ce n'est pas son effigie qu'il regarde dans le miroir, c'est tout le visible qui, tournant autour de cette conscience devenue 'centre', lui montre sa pensée partout reflétée.²⁵

But Gide's own logic of retroaction eventually leads him away from his idealist position because as surely as the subject orders and colors the material world, so to the material world reflects back on and influences the subject.

Paludes -- "Traité de la Contingence" -- announced a heightened consciousness in Gide's work, not only by

decentering the subjective presence in the text through duplication, but also by representing the subtle dialectic between interior and exterior. Maurice Nadeau writes,

En tant qu'âme promise à Dieu il avait vécu dans les nuées; redescendant sur terre, il lui faut découvrir le fait d'exister qui est exister dans le monde) à travers le 'fait de conscience' élémentaire qui assoit dans un unique phénomène le sujet et l'objet: la sensation.²⁶

Paludes paved the way for les Nourritures terrestres and the author's materialist conversion which Nadeau goes on to describe in these terms

Par les sens le monde existe; par la sensation il est préhensible, connaissable, à travers un rapport de participation. L'excitation appelle la réaction qui, à son tour, suscite de nouveaux stimuli.²⁷

Les Nourritures terrestres, announced in the 1897 "Postface" to Paludes as the author's conversion to a more materialist vision, is a hymn to sensual pleasure and a critique of bourgeois mentality. By his own account Gide wanted to, "précipiter la littérature dans un abîme de sensualisme d'où elle ne puisse sortir que complètement régénérée." (III, p.1486) The extent to which he succeeded is open to discussion, but he did manage to disconcert many of his colleagues of the literary journal Centaure who accused him of being artificial. Gide later commented on the

reactions to this unusual work and the literary context in which it first appeared

Quand ont paru mes Nourritures, on était en plein Symbolisme; j'ai cru que l'art courait de grands risques à se séparer ainsi résolument du naturel et de la vie. Mais mon livre était beaucoup trop naturel pour ne point paraître factice à ceux qui n'avaient plus de goût que pour l'artificiel; et précisément parce qu'il s'échappait de la littérature, on n'y vit d'abord que la quintessence de la littérature. (III, p.1486)

Although this book was amply criticized and certainly did not achieve the commercial success that Gide would have liked, it did find admirers, particularly among young writers of the time, and received favorable reviews in the avant-garde press.²⁸ Contrary to Gide's own assertions, his break with Symbolism was very much in tune with the esthetic aspirations of a new generation. Edmond Jaloux, writing for the Marseille daily L'Indépendance républicaine, declared Ménalque, protagonist of Les Nourritures terrestres, to be the new Werther or René of the coming century. He saw a profound optimism and love for life in this unique work, going so far as to glorify it in these terms: "Je sais de nombreux esprits qui ont été bouleversés par Les Nourritures terrestres, et moi-même j'en ai fait mon évangile."²⁹ This seminal work in Gide's career marks a shift away from sterile idealism and self-absorption toward an organic

vision of human existence and an awareness of others. In an 1897 letter to his Belgian friend André Ruijters Gide writes

Crois bien que ce qui mange mon Je n'est pas seulement mon idée. Si Je suis moins, c'est aussi que je m'intéresse toujours plus aux autres.³⁰

This change in perspective is marked by a seven year hiatus of journal entries. Gide had come to see his Journal as a narcissistic device that lead him to obsessive introspection and prevented a more genuine contact with the world around him. He traveled extensively in North Africa and, most significantly recovered from a terrible bout with tuberculosis. In fact, he came to see his illness as a wellspring of his art; the uneasiness and difference from others that one feels through illness produces a feeling of disequilibrium and a search for a new order: "La maladie propose à l'homme une inquiétude nouvelle, qu'il s'agit de légitimer." (JAG I,98)

As previously stated, although Les Nourritures terrestres represented a radical break with contemporary ideas of literature and particularly with the Symbolists, Gide was not merely a voice crying out in the desert. His new work was acclaimed by the nascent Naturist movement of writers forming around St. Georges de Bouhélier and Maurice Le Blond. These young writers found their avatars in the early French Romantics--Fénelon, Rousseau and Bernardin de

Saint-Pierre. They published harsh criticism of the Symbolists, especially Mallarmé and Henri de Régnier, and called for a return to nature, to an expression of the senses rather than the intellect. They expressed great admiration for Gide and his long-time friend Francis Jammes. Gide found much to agree with in the Naturist movement, but was bothered by the unbridled attacks against Régnier and Mallarmé.

Bouhéliier, with the help of Emile Zola, published a manifesto of Naturism in the January 10, 1897 issue of Le Figaro in which he defined the esthetic principles of the new movement as an amor fati of the material world.

Au lieu d'évoquer de charmantes et de suaves seigneurs chimériques, nous chanterons les hautes fêtes de l'homme. Pour la splendeur de ce spectacle, les poètes convoqueront les plantes, les étoiles, les vents et les graves animaux. Une littérature naîtra qui glorifiera les marins, les laboureurs nés des entrailles du sol et les pasteurs qui habitent près des aigles.³¹

But if Gide could find common ideas in this introduction, one can only imagine his reaction to what followed and which Claude Martin correctly qualifies as, ". . . sans ambiguïté, une morale xénophobe, une esthétique raciste . . ."³² In effect, Bouhéliier mounted a series of attacks against Shakespeare, Schopenhauer, Wagner, Nietzsche and Ibsen as nefarious foreign influences that had subjugated French literature--"Leur pensée qui nous accapare

défigure l'esprit de la race . . ."33 At this point, without publicly denouncing the Naturists, Gide nevertheless began to distance himself from their movement. But despite his very tentative involvement with this movement and subsequent denial of their esthetic principles, his Nourritures terrestres came to be seen as the only true Naturist work.

Si le naturisme, comme je le crois, n'est qu'une revendication du droit au lyrisme, un retour aux conceptions les plus larges de la nature et de la vie, et, par opposition aux théories individualistes ou mystiques, l'affirmation d'une sorte de panthéisme à la fois réaliste et moral, alors l'oeuvre de Gide est bien une oeuvre naturiste, et, . . . il faudra le nommer au premier rang.³⁴

Once again, and despite Gide's affirmations to the contrary, he had crystallized the new esthetic concerns of a rising generation of writers. But if Les Nourritures terrestres illustrates perfectly the thrust of the new Naturist esthetic, it also contains structural elements that continue to appear as leitmotifs in his subsequent works.

The two structural elements in question for the purpose of this study have been mentioned in connection with Gide's earlier works and will be discussed at length in a later chapter concerning Les Faux-Monnayeurs. The first is the narrative play that consists in inscribing a story within another story that resembles it. This is the mise en abyme mentioned earlier and which Gide accomplishes in Les

Nourritures terrestres by inserting "Le Récit de Ménalque." Gide regretted the previous publication of this text in excerpted form and originally planned not to include it in the final version. He finally did so, at least in part, to add this extra narrative dimension to his work.³⁵

The second structural element is best resumed by Francis Jammes in a letter he sent to Gide immediately after the publication of Les Nourritures terrestres in which he writes: "Chacune de tes pensées portait en elle, DIRECTEMENT, sa propre réfutation."³⁶ Gide's text is continually undermined by a vacillating point of view as the narrator balances affirmation with negation--success may also be a type of failure, goodness may also be evil, good intentions may disguise selfish motives. This play of opposites maintains a narrative tension throughout the text and prevents it from becoming didactic, as it would by offering simplistic moral lessons.

Finally, although at first glance a disordered text of lyrical effusion, Les Nourritures terrestres is, like Gide's other works, carefully and purposefully assembled, as Claude Martin demonstrates.³⁷ Henri Ghéon, soon to become one of Gide's closest friends and collaborators, was one of the few critics to perceive the subtle development of Les Nourritures terrestres:

Ce livre est doublement admirable parce qu'il est pensé et senti; et c'est le prodige du poète

d'avoir su développer une thèse philosophique avec un tel lyrisme, et de nous avoir offert une oeuvre complète où triomphent tous les dons que nous avions admirés un à un, épars dans chacun de ses livres.³⁸

The intimate tone of this book engages the reader to enter the subjective world of the narrator's thoughts and sensations, but also demands that he shed his traditionally anonymous and passive reader's role. He is asked to participate actively in the deciphering of the narrative, to use it for his own purposes and go beyond. Already, in the preface to Paludes, the author called upon his reader to explain his text to him.

Un livre est toujours une collaboration, et tant plus le livre vaut-il, que plus la part du scribe y est petite . . . Attendons de partout la révélation des choses; du public, la révélation de nos oeuvres. (III,p.89)

Gide's Readers

The idea of reader participation was always a concern of Gide's and he was often disappointed not only by the frequent misinterpretation of his works, but also by the small number of readers he attracted. He considered his public to be quite limited, at one point in 1898 complaining to André Ruijters that he didn't have twelve good readers in France.³⁹ This is obviously an exaggeration because, as

previously mentioned, Gide did have a substantial and sympathetic readership. But he was rarely satisfied with the reactions of his readers. Throughout his career he readily responded to any criticism in the press. It is certain that he didn't expect his works to be great commercial successes and, happily, he didn't depend on the sales of his works for his livelihood, but he remained acutely aware of the public reaction to his writing.

In two brilliant lectures given in Brussels in 1900 and in Weimar in 1903, Gide discusses the role of the artist in relation to literary tradition and in relation to his readers. The first, called De l'influence en littérature, revolved around two basic ideas: first, influence isn't good or bad in any absolute sense, only in relation to the person influenced and second, it is impossible to avoid all influence. (OC III, p.250) To the contrary, a truly great individual need not fear losing his personality through influence; he should be receptive to it.

Un grand homme n'a qu'un souci: devenir le plus humain possible, --disons mieux: DEVENIR BANAL. Devenir banal, Shakespeare, banal Goethe, Molière, Balzac, Tolstoi . . . c'est ainsi qu'il devient le plus personnel. Tandis que celui qui fuit l'humanité pour lui-même, n'arrive qu'à devenir particulier, bizarre, défectueux . . . (OC III, p.261)

The great artist is one who both undergoes and exerts influence. The idea expressed by the artist exists, in a

certain sense, only in virtual form before finding its place in the mind of a reader; but the artist bears a heavy responsibility for the influence of his ideas. To relieve him of the torment of this responsibility he needs the help of a group

Chez l'artiste, souvent, la soumission d'autrui qu'il obtient a des causes très différentes. Un mot pourrait, je crois, les résumer: il ne se suffit pas à lui-même. . . . Il a besoin d'adjoints, de substituts, de secrétaires. . . . Il influence: d'autres vivront et joueront pour lui ses idées; risqueront le danger de les expérimenter à sa place. (OC III,p.262)

It is important to note this series of dialectical oppositions in Gide's esthetic. In the discussion of Paludes and of Les Nourritures terrestres I pointed out the dynamic nature of writing and reading, that is, the retroactive influence of the work on its author and the reader's active role of interpretation. Here one may see the relationship broadened to indicate the mutual influence of the writer and the literary community; the writer's work is inscribed within the tradition of literary production. Gide makes it clear in his 1903 lecture in Weimar, De l'importance du public (OC IV,p.181-197), that the writer cannot ignore his public; he must respond to it. This doesn't imply yielding to public sentiment, but establishing a true rapport of communication with the readers, better understanding his work through them.

Auguste Anglès synthesizes these two lectures well.

Ces deux conférences complémentaires sont une profession de foi en la nécessité et en les bienfaits de l'interaction. L'écrivain doit s'ouvrir aux influences et influencer à son tour; Goethe a été bonnifié par la cour de Weimar autant qu'il l'a éduquée; l'artiste qui s'isole, ou que ses contemporains condamnent à l'isolement, verse dans l'extravagance ou s'étirole. Lorsque Gide languit après un public, ce n'est pas une action à sens unique qu'il ambitionne: il souhaite en retour être modifié. . . . il sait qu'entre autrui et lui se joue l'avenir de son talent, de son être.⁴⁰

The reader Gide had in mind was an enlightened friend and, indeed, Claude Martin remarks that Gide always seemed to need a closely knit group of friends, in whom he could confide and whose judgment he could trust.⁴¹ Gide had begun collaborating with various literary journals quite early in his career and, near the end of the century, he was a frequent contributor to La Revue Blanche and L'Ermitage, among others. He was easily persuaded to contribute pieces to new, often short-lived journals, but was reluctant to become identified with any particular group. Although he greatly valued his independence, he did seem to need a solid support group, as previously stated, and often attempted to bring his close friends into a journal he had penetrated.⁴²

In a series of thirteen articles called "Lettres à Angèle" Gide analysed current trends in literature and began to develop a subtle vision of the intellectual climate,

periodically discussing political, philosophical and moral problems. He also showed a great sensitivity in these articles to foreign authors still largely unknown in France, such as Nietzsche, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Dickens. He encouraged the translation and diffusion of foreign works in France at a time when more established critics were proposing nationalistic and at times even racist criteria for literary selection.

At a time when polemic often became grossly insulting, Gide sought a higher ground for criticism, often praising the work of those with whom he disagreed fundamentally. His treatment of Les Déracinés by Maurice Barrès is a good example of his method. He treated Barrès with the greatest respect, praising his brilliant style and imagery as well as his character portrayal. He expressed unqualified agreement with the importance of the problem treated by Barrès but, in the end, found two basic faults: a heavy-handed ideological bent that bordered on the didactic and a misunderstanding of the true dilemma that his characters faced. Gide maintained that, in fact, the novel clearly demonstrated the exact opposite of Barrès' stated thesis.

Putting aside the question of the validity of Gide's judgment, it is interesting to note the thrust of his critical judgment. On the one hand, he reproaches Barrès for not giving the reader the freedom to judge for himself, and on the other, he clearly demonstrated how the intentions of

the author can, through a close reading, be reversed. It is through such subtle and objective critiques that Gide became known and respected as a new voice in the literary community.

Gide's judgment of Barrès is symptomatic of his view of much of contemporary French literature which he found to be stagnating within the confines of a strictly defined ideology of national consciousness and middle class morality. It was time, he felt, like the protagonist of Paludes, to open all the windows and doors to let in fresh air. With the idea of promoting new ideas in literature, foreign and domestic, Gide began making plans to create a literary journal with a closely knit group of friends. The result of their association was the Nouvelle Revue Française which soon became a forum for new ideas and continually refused to be co-opted by political or religious movements. The various contributors maintained their independent voices and, despite inevitable clashes of opinion, they continually offered their readers the best in new writing and criticism. A list of early contributors to the N.R.F. reads like a Who's Who of 20th century French literature and criticism, though at the time these authors were largely unknown.

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons that the N.R.F. encountered such success with the young intellectuals of the time was its openness to innovation and its quick, confident

analysis of current trends. Auguste Anglès writes of his impressions on reading the early issues of the N.R.F.

. . . d'une curiosité en éveil, d'une réflexion murie et pourtant enthousiaste, d'une ample conversation qui va se diversifiant à travers maintes incidentes, que de grands thèmes relient et dominant. . . . leur promptitude à faire surgir un problème général.⁴³

The poised judgment of the editorial board and 'regulars' came perhaps from years of informal conversations and elective affinities that brought them together. The strength of their common project was then evident in the style and presentation of their journal.

Three unifying themes that Anglès finds in the early issues of the journal are, 1) classical qualities as opposed to romantic aberrations, 2) classicism as the only true expression of the French genius and 3) the value of psychological and moral exploration.⁴⁴ The debate with the different 'chapelles' of Paris was engaged on far-reaching questions and, though the attacks and responses sometimes degenerated into sterile posturing, they forced attention to be focused on the nature of current French literature and its place within history.

Gide wrote a series of three articles in successive issues of the N.R.F. in 1909 under the general title "Nationalisme et Littérature" in which he subtly enveloped the arguments of Henri Clouard concerning a 'national

literature' by pointing to the fundamental ambiguity of any such definition. Over the course of these three articles, he gradually abandoned the questions of national literature and classicism to lead his readers toward a more subtle vision of literary works, to be viewed in terms of their individual coherence rather than as expressions of sound moral principles.⁴⁵

It is in this sense that we understand Gide's repeated request that his own works be judged only for their esthetic qualities. Many of his contemporaries focused their attention exclusively on the moral implications of a text and their incursions into questions of form served only to define the author as part of a particular literary tradition which in turn led them back to moral concerns of national character. It should be evident from Gide's own criticism as well as from his fiction that he was not opposed to a discussion of ethical principles represented by the various voices in a text, but he did oppose a superficial reading that reduced all the voices to one and ignored the complexities of narrative structure and ironic distancing.

A Mosaic of Novels

This last section will treat Gide's conception of the novel as one finds it both in his critical works for the literary press and in latent form in his fictional works

during the two decades preceding Les Faux-Monnayeurs. The intention here is not to formulate extensive analyses of these fictional works themselves, but rather to highlight certain aspects regarding narrative technique, modes of irony and the mediation of experience in novelistic form.

One hesitates to speak of an evolution in Gide's esthetic ideas because he himself argued explicitly against such an interpretation of his works. He claimed, on several occasions, to have conceived the whole of his works from the beginning, and there exists solid corroborative evidence from his friends and acquaintances. As Auguste Anglès says, ". . . il n'a cessé de revendiquer son appartenance à l'ordre du simultané."⁴⁶ In one of his famous "Billets à Angèle" Gide claims to have conceived all of his fictional works from L'Immoraliste through La Symphonie pastorale before the age of thirty. (III, p.1582) This seems to contradict Gide's previously mentioned statements concerning the dynamic relationship between an author, his work and his public. In order to reconcile these ideas of simultaneity with dynamic interaction, one must consider the context of their utterance.

It is a particular characteristic of Gide's work that he continually surprised his readers by publishing books, one after the other, with radically different perspectives. Devotees of one work might very well be outraged by the abrupt shifts from l'Immoraliste to la Porte étroite to

Isabelle to les Caves du Vatican to la Symphonie pastorale. For anyone who reads these works in the order in which they were published, it is easy to see why Gide frustrated his supporters and confounded his critics by refusing to fix himself in a niche.

He preferred to see the succession of his works as pieces of a mosaic for which he had conceived the master plan, but was obliged to issue the separate parts one after the other. In a letter to André Beaunier, which Gide copied in his Journal, we read

Tous ces sujets (La Porte étroite, L'Immoraliste, Les Caves) se sont développés parallèlement, concurremment--et si j'ai écrit tel livre avant tel autre c'est que le sujet me paraissait plus 'at hand' comme dit l'Anglais. Si j'avais pu, c'est ensemble que je les aurais écrits. (JAG I,p.437)

Not only were the subjects conceived of in the same time period, they were also related to one another as different perspectives on a single problem. In response to an article by a Catholic clergyman, Gide wrote of L'Immoraliste, La Porte étroite, Isabelle and La Symphonie pastorale

Ils dénoncent tour à tour les dangers de l'individualisme outrancière, d'une certaine forme de mysticisme très précisément Protestant . . . du romantisme et, dans La Symphonie pastorale, de la libre interprétation des Ecritures. (III,p.1583)

These four books are critical works that ironically deconstruct their subjects, embodied by the four successive protagonists (Michel, Alissa, Gérard and the pastor), each beset by the demon of self-deception. They are all deceived in their attempts at lucidity concerning the motives for their own actions and those of others. In each case, they interpret events and construct their persona through a lopsided vision of the world. In the case of Michel, the individualism becomes egocentrism and eventually self-indulgent narcissism. Similarly, Alissa's Protestant mysticism becomes a narcissistic martyrdom. In the case of Isabelle, the subject of the story is, "la déception même de Gérard aussitôt que la plate réalité reprend la place de l'illusion." (III, p.1561) In La Symphonie pastorale, the pastor's pretense to altruism and purity of motives, rationalized through biblical interpretation, becomes transparently self-serving as well as destructive to those around him. As for Les Caves du Vatican, it is a variegated model of deception that culminates in Lafcadio's self-deception concerning the possible absence of motives in the 'acte gratuit.'

The simultaneous conception of this series of novels is plausible from the point of view of their related subjects, but it also represents an idealistic, even reductionist view of literature seemingly standing in contradiction to Gide's

previously exposed ideas of the dynamic nature of his works. In defense of his works he goes so far as to say that the different elements correspond to the demands of the subject, much as a painter is obliged to add certain elements or change his shading in order to render a harmonious and unified whole. In defense of La Porte étroite, he writes, "J'ai seulement cherché de bien peindre et d'éclairer bien ma peinture." (III, p.1551) But from conception to concretization in novel form is the distance between idea and act. If the subject is the organizing principle in each novel that dictates the mode of execution, that is, the narrative voice, the style and tenor of the prose, then the dynamic and unpredictable element is present in the execution where the different aspects (descriptions, characterizations, imagery and analysis) adjust to a harmonious orbit around the subject.

This type of internal coherence or harmony then should be the basis of esthetic judgement. Gide often reiterated his desire that his works be judged only for their esthetic qualities and not as a personal moral statement. But esthetics and ethics were inevitably imbricated in his work. His expressed desire that his work be judged from an esthetic viewpoint was a reaction against dominant critical tendencies of the period. As previously noted, literary criticism of the time often focused on the conformity of a work to scientific, ideological or religious principles.

Critics searched for a central point of view and attributed it to the author, often using biographical anecdotes as proof positive of the presence of the author in a certain character and the resultant transparency of his intentions. This was a reduction of literature to a subordinate status in relation to a particular epistemology, as a didactic tool to inculcate the masses. At the other extreme, many modernist critics have taken Gide's esthetic stand in a 'pure art' sense, claiming that the only legitimate interpretation of Gide's works was through purely esthetic categories. Yvonne Davet aptly relativizes this purist position.

Gide cependant, dès cette époque, demandait, en vain, que ses livres fussent jugés du seul point de vue esthétique. Non tant pour éviter qu'ils pâtissent des contradictions morales accumulées, que parce qu'il trouvait lui-même, dans l'oeuvre d'art, leur seule solution. Personnellement tiraillé, déchiré, il se persuadait qu'il allait de l'enrichissement de son oeuvre, et ainsi tout était justifié. De sorte que, plus le sujet lui tenait au coeur, plus il le touchait de près, et plus il s'efforçait de le détacher, à force d'art, de sa vie propre.⁴⁷

Gide was a leading member of a young group of 'littérateurs' who wanted to free literature from the bondage of ideological conformity and reaffirm its autonomy. This was not an attempt to deny any moral signification but to affirm the primacy, in art, of esthetic principles; not art for art, but art first. The Nouvelle Revue Française

became the forum for literary experimentation, both foreign and domestic, and for esthetic criticism.

Gide's intention in his own work was not to provide answers but rather to provoke thought by presenting complex problems. The most complex of these problems arise from self-deception. They are, in a broad sense, problems of language inasmuch as they involve conflicting interpretations of reality, of the meaning hidden in gestures and words and the gulf between intention and action. The intention is a double movement, oriented toward the future but based on past actions--a certain cause creates a certain effect. The action produces a retroactive evaluation to reconcile the effect to the cause and so prepare for further action. This may seem to be simple logic when viewed in the singular, but when separate intentions cross, it becomes considerably more complex and the risk of deception and misunderstanding increases proportionately. Crossed intentions exist not only between individuals but within individuals as conflicting desires. A perfect illustration of crossed intentions and conflicting desires is the scene in Les Faux-Monnayeurs where Olivier goes to the train station to meet his uncle Edouard. We shall return to this idea in the next two chapters.

But already in Gide's early works one can see this theme developing not only in the subject of the works, but translated into the structure of the narrative as irony,

marking the distance between subject and object. The subject of self-deception and the ironic mode in which it is developed are constants, but their elaboration in each instance is a dynamic process, dependent on the chosen perspective--the individualist, the mystic, the romantic or the altruist.

Gide saw these pieces of the mosaic of self-deception as a debt incurred to himself at an early age and which he finally paid off with the publication of La Symphonie pastorale, leaving him free at last to conceive a new work oriented toward the future rather than toward the past.

. . . que je ne faisais, en l'écrivant [La Symphonie pastorale] que m'acquitter d'une ancienne dette contractée jadis envers moi-même; que jusqu'à présent je n'avais pas écrit un seul livre qui n'eût été conçu dès avant ma trentième année. . . . mais qu'à présent, enfin, j'étais quitte; que ce livre était ma dernière dette envers le passé; que je l'avais écrit pour m'exonérer; que pour l'écrire et le mener à bien j'avais dû terriblement me contrefaire, ou du moins entrer dans les plis effacés; que durant tout le temps que je l'écrivais, je pestais contre ce travail au petit point qu'exigeait la donnée du problème, contre ces demi-tons, ces nuances--tandis que ce que je souhaitais maintenant, c'était . . . mais je vous dirais cela une autre fois. (III,p.1582)

The reference is, of course, to Les Faux-Monnayeurs begun two years earlier and in germination since Les Caves du Vatican. It would be difficult to argue against Gide in favor of an evolution in the ideas in his successive novels

or, for that matter, an evolution in technique. L'Immoraliste, the first in the series of ironic or critical novels, is as complex and subtly structured as those that follow. One might rather speak of a diversification in technique--first-person and third-person narratives, objective descriptions and états d'âme, dialogues and characterization, multiple perspective and auto-referentiality. With Les Faux-Monnayeurs Gide synthesizes, in one work, the variegated elements of his previous efforts and sets them in motion in the absence of a unifying subject other than their own composition. I will expand on this idea in the following chapters.

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31. Ibid., p.173.
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33. Ibid., p.174.
34. Ibid., p.206.
35. Ibid., p.206.
36. Ibid., p.207.
37. Ibid., p.210-211.
38. Ibid., p.212.
39. Anglès, p.17.
40. Ibid., p.19.
41. Ibid., p.14.
42. Ibid., p.22.
43. Ibid., p.218.
44. Ibid., p.200.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., p.14.
47. Davet, p.1551.

CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS IN LES FAUX-MONNAYEURS

It will be helpful for the analysis that follows to briefly examine Les Faux-Monnayeurs from the perspective of traditional components of the novel--description, dialogue and narrative voice. Having shown Gide's dissatisfaction with the realist tradition, it will be interesting to contrast the composition of his novel with that of his immediate predecessors.

Description and Setting

Physical description is practically absent from the novel and, when it occurs, it is of an extremely subjective nature. Though many of the characters are subject to moral description, only a few of the minor characters merit a brief physical description. An acquaintance of Olivier, Dhurmer, is "un petit barbu à pince-nez, sensiblement plus âgé qu'eux." (III, p.935) Alberic Profitendieu is "encore vert à cinquante-cinq ans, de coffre creux et de démarche alerte," and his colleague, Oscar Molinier, is "beaucoup plus court que lui et de moindre développement crural; de

plus, le coeur capitonné de graisse, il s'essoufflait facilement." (III,p.938) At the 'Banquet des Argonautes,' Alfred Jarry is presented as "Une sorte de jocrisse étrange, à la face enfarinée, à l'oeil de jais, aux cheveux plaqués comme une calotte de moleskine . . ." (III,p.1169) Lilian Griffith's pajamas and colorful turbans are mentioned not so much for the reader to envision the scene as to indicate Lilian's liberated, even lurid behavior.¹ Finally, the old Comte de Passavant is briefly described on his deathbed after rigor mortis has set in, but more to prepare for Gontran's struggle to place the cross properly in his hands than to give the reader a vivid impression of a man on his deathbed. This is literally the extent of the primary narrator's descriptions of his characters; the reader never has the faintest clue as to height, weight, hair color or facial characteristics of any of the primary characters.

Similarly, Edouard's journal contains but a few brief descriptions. For instance, Edouard describes Laura's marriage ceremony and reception with particular attention directed to his nephew Olivier. But these are what one might call descriptions of circumstance, that is, descriptions of a particular attitude or pose at a particular moment, in particular circumstances; often colored by Edouard's emotional involvement. There is also a brief description of his other nephew, Georges Molinier, after a chance encounter in front of a book store. This passage is unusual in that

Edouard very specifically comments on this meeting and wonders whether it would be suitable for his novel. (III,p.1001) Finally the description of Madame de La Pérouse,

Sous sa perruque à bandeaux noirs qui durcit les traits de son visage blafard, avec ses longues mitaines noires d'où sortent des petits doigts comme des griffes, madame de La Pérouse prenait un aspect de harpie. (III,p.1059)

Edouard, like the narrator, generally eschews description and, aside from Edouard in his journal, the other characters never describe one another. The obvious result is that the reader never develops a visual impression of the characters.

Both the narrator and Edouard give subjectively charged descriptions focusing on character traits or on the emotional state of a given character. The narrator describes Olivier early in the novel: "Son visage presque enfantin encore et son regard révèlent la précocité de sa pensée. Il rougit facilement. Il est tendre." (III,p.935) Lucien Bercaill "semble n'exister que par le coeur et par l'esprit." (III,p.937) Bernard "aux yeux si francs, au front si clair, au geste si craintif, à la voix si mal assurée" (III,p.1034) This is the type of description that abounds in Les Faux-Monnayeurs.

There are occasional allusive descriptions of clothes and a few sketchy descriptions of places, but they are totally at the service of narrative events. Laura's hotel room is described in order to set the scene for her fall into Bernard's arms. Edouard's apartment is described in order to account for the comings and goings of various visitors without disturbing the convalescent Olivier. The only commentary that Bernard and Edouard have concerning the landscape in the Alps is that it is "déclamatoire." (III,p.1068) The slight description of the classroom where Boris commits suicide only shows where the teacher is located in relation to the students' desks and to the spot where Boris stood to shoot himself. The descriptions of the rooms in the Pension Vedel are brief, focusing only on details that render the feeling of decrepitude or that show how certain characters may observe the movements of others or be themselves observed. The church of Laura's wedding is described in terms of its stark oppressiveness as a pretext for a critique of the Protestant ethic and in contrast to the narrator's feelings for Olivier.

It is as if the author wanted to reduce the visual element of his novel as much as possible, giving the sparest of brush strokes to suggest a scene or a person, thereby allowing the reader to imagine the true contours and colors. The space within the novel, the space within which the events and dialogues take place, is in this way purified

and, in a sense, generalized and rendered abstract. Gide strips his decor down to the bare bones. This is of course no accident, as Gide had specifically stated in his Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs that a novel should avoid precise description as much as possible, leaving the exact visual portrayal of people and places to photography. (OC VII, p.40) It is interesting to note that Gide's good friend and collaborator at the Nouvelle Revue Française, Jacques Copeau, had similar ideas about purified space for his theater productions at the Vieux Colombier. Gide invited Copeau to come listen to chapters of Les Faux-Monnayeurs several times during the years of its elaboration. (OC VII, p.9) The effect of this rarefied space in the novel is, on the one hand, to give much more importance to other aspects of the narrative, such as the words or actions (these actions are themselves often either writing or reading) of the characters and, on the other hand, when there is precise description, to focus the reader's attention and make him search for a justification beyond mere setting. One of the most striking examples of this comes at the beginning of the novel and therefore would only be noticed retrospectively or on a second reading. The narrator describes in detail the chest of drawers from which Bernard has removed his mother's letters. This description, however, has less to do with setting than it does with the thematic of framing, and, as

Alain Goulet and others have pointed out, as a symbolic representation of the novel itself.²

The single generalization that one might make about the space of the novel, beyond the negative aspect of being nondescript, is that with a few brief exceptions the entire narrative takes place within enclosed spaces, mostly in rooms, occasionally on terraces or in courtyards. This is especially true of the secondary narrative, Edouard's journal, in which the only outdoor scene is his first encounter with his nephew Georges in front of the book store. The exceptions in the primary narrative are mostly in the first part. Bernard goes to find Olivier in the Jardin du Luxembourg. Albéric Profitendieu and Oscar Molinier have a conversation while walking home from work. Bernard takes a nap on a park bench. In the second part, Olivier meets Bernard in front of the lycée and, in the same scene, Georges, Phiphi and Ghéridanisol are shown passing counterfeit coins. None of these scenes gives a single descriptive detail about the surroundings. In this sense, the narrative transpires in private rather than public space and reenforces the reader's intimate, even voyeuristic relationship with the characters. I will return to the idea of intimacy and voyeurism in a later discussion of narrative voice.

The setting then is of little consequence except as it subjectively affects the characters who inhabit it. Bernard

feels uncomfortable in the forced intimacy of Olivier's room. Edouard feels uncomfortable in the church because of protestant ethic that it embodies and in the Pension Vedel because of the memories it holds. Both Olivier and his brother Vincent are intimidated by Robert de Passavant's salon because of their own feelings of inferiority. Indeed, physical description as such seems to have little bearing on either the characters or the action of the narrative. The identity of such nondescript characters depends entirely on the words they speak and the actions they take. They are disembodied voices like the young Gontran de Passavant who, alone in a room with his dead father, hears a voice say "Nom de Dieu" and then realizes that it is his own. (III,p.967)

Dialogue

This leads to an examination of the nature of dialogue in Les Faux-Monnayeurs. Gide is not generally known for being a master at the art of dialogue. It isn't that his characters don't have interesting things to say or that they don't say them at the right moment, but rather that the words all seem to come from the same source, that is, from the author. Critics have reproached Les Faux-Monnayeurs for this, saying that the characters seemed to speak with one voice, that there weren't speech patterns or lexical traits specific to individual characters. This is in some sense

true, although one might make the case that, recognizing this weakness, Gide designed a narrative that makes structural use of homogeneous dialogue. In order to prove this though it will be necessary to first examine how dialogue is incorporated into the narrative.

There are certainly numerous examples of traditional dialogue that, from a formal point of view, provoke no commentary. They display normal conversational and colloquial speech patterns. They are indicated in the text by quotation marks at the beginning of a series of exchanges. A change of speaker is indicated by a dash and often a standard attribution of reported speech. This is a standard procedure for direct discourse. The many letters, notes and messages are similarly well delineated although they have the added twist of sometimes containing other reported speech. Edouard's journal, which could certainly be considered direct discourse since all of the entries are contained within quotation marks, also contains reported speech of other characters either as spoken or written words. The thoughts of the characters are also at times reported as direct speech as in the first sentence of the novel, "C'est le moment de croire que l'on entend des pas, se dit Bernard." (III,p.933) This particular capacity is reserved for the primary narrator alone and so designates him as an omniscient narrator although, as becomes obvious, his omniscience is mitigated later on. This is part of

Gide's general strategy to undermine the reliability of the narrator.

Dialogues may also be represented by indirect discourse. This is, of course, a mediated form of brute discourse, usually summarizing the purported speaker's words and often translating them into the style of the person reporting them. This is primarily the domain of the narrator, although indirect discourse could logically be contained within the direct discourse of a character when he in turn begins to narrate. Les Faux-Monnayeurs is rife with indirect discourse, not only from the primary narrator and from Edouard, but from numerous other characters as well.

Direct and indirect discourse were long the mainstays of narrative prose and were a part of verisimilitude. Fictional prose attempted to resemble history or journalism, imitating its form of presenting discourse in a believable manner. Indeed, throughout the eighteenth century novelists went to great lengths to give the impression that their fiction was in fact true. They wrote memoirs that were supposedly found and pretended to be simply conveying them to the public. Similarly, epistolary novels often contained prefaces claiming the true existence of the letters. It is doubtful that many people believed that Les Liaisons dangereuses was really a collection of letters that Choderlos de Laclos had found or that Manon Lescaut was the fruit of a chance encounter along the roads of France, but

the pretense was a literary device meant to reenforce the illusion of reality. Such novels were essentially all discourse that narrated whether the narrator was the protagonist or not. Balzac and Stendhal abandoned the illusory first-person narrator for a more objective third-person using precise description, commonly observed behavior and realistic dialogue to create their illusion. The narrator was, in a sense, effaced--the lens through which the reader viewed the action. The narrator was a god-like being, omnipresent and omniscient, creator of the characters and action but exterior to them.

Flaubert, in refining the novelist's tools of illusion, confronted the paradox of being immersed in the character's consciousness and at the same time exterior to it. He is generally credited with the systematic development of a literary device that renders this paradox evident--free indirect discourse. This intermediary form of reported speech allows the narrator to appropriate the speaker's discourse and reduce the distance between narrator and character.

Free indirect discourse had become common practice among novelists by the time Gide began writing. Profiting from his predecessors, Gide became highly skilled in the use of this technique and employed it to good end in Les Faux-Monnayeurs to put into question the distance between the narrator and speaker. It also demonstrates the narrator's

place in relation to the characters and to the story, as the brief historical view above might indicate and we shall return to this precise point in our discussion below of narrative voice.

The most striking examples of free indirect discourse occur in Chapter 2 of the first part. Bernard's father, Albéric Profitendieu, is discussing a delicate affair of prostitution involving the adolescent children of respectable families with his colleague Oscar Molinier, Olivier's father. The passage begins with a brief description of Albéric's current mental and resultant physical state in which the narrator reports the thoughts of his character, sliding gradually from objective, omniscient narration into the judge's stream of consciousness.

Il songeait au bain qu'il allait prendre: rien ne le reposait mieux des soucis du jour qu'un bon bain; en provision de quoi il n'avait pas goûté ce jourd'hui, estimant qu'il n'est pas prudent d'entrer dans l'eau, fut-elle tiède, qu'avec un estomac non chargé. Après tout, ce n'était peut-être là qu'un préjugé; mais les préjugés sont les pilotis de la civilisation. (III, p.938)

There is a subtle movement in verb tense and linguistic shifters that almost imperceptibly narrows the distance between the narrator and his character. The narrator begins the passage with two descriptive imperfects, then an iterative imperfect, a past perfect and the linguistic shifter "ce jourd'hui". This archaic form is ambiguous, but

would seem to more appropriately emanate from Profitendieu, the demonstrative functioning as a marker of presence. The tense then shifts to an iterative present that parallels the preceding imperfect "reposait" and should, for grammatical coherence, also be in the imperfect. The "après tout," as a conversational device used to forestall objections, sets up a confusion between the narrator and Profitendieu for the last phrase, ". . . les préjugés sont les pilotis de la civilisation." This is obviously the inner voice of Profitendieu, not the narrator. The narrator then resumes control for a satirical description of the two men which leads to a series of exchanges in reported direct discourse. Finally, following Molinier's inquiry about his children, the narrator responds for Profitendieu,

En effet Profitendieu n'avait eu jusqu'à présent qu'à se louer de ses fils; mais il ne se faisait pas d'illusion: la meilleure éducation du monde ne prévalait pas contre les mauvais instincts . . . (III,p.940)

Once again the narrator is giving voice to the judge's thoughts, then, ". . . Dieu merci, ses enfants n'avaient pas de mauvais instincts, non plus que les enfants de Molinier sans doute . . ." (III,p.940) The conversational exclamation "Dieu merci" would be inappropriate in the mouth of the narrator, as would the phrase "sans doute"; they are a direct presentation of the judge's thoughts. This gradual

immersion into his character is carried to an extreme a few lines later with, "Quant à l'affaire en question, il y réfléchirait encore . . . Au surplus, les vacances se chargerait de disperser les délinquants. Au revoir." (III,p.940-941) There are no quotation marks in this entire passage that moves from third-person narration to free indirect discourse to direct discourse.

Immediately following Profitendieu's arrival home the narrator flashes back to Bernard's parting words to the family servant, Antoine. This passage uses three different typographic signs to indicate who is speaking.

<< Monsieur Bernard ne rentre pas dîner? --Ni pour coucher, Antoine. . . . Bernard répéta plus intentionnellement: "Je m'en vais", puis il ajouta: --J'ai laissé une lettre sur . . . la table du bureau. Adieu.>> (III,p.941)

Here, instead of an absence of quotation marks, there is an overabundance and the narrator's commentary is included in the reported speech. Similarly, this passage immediately afterwards.

<< Avant de s'en aller, Monsieur Bernard a laissé une lettre pour Monsieur dans le bureau. Phrase si simple qu'elle risquait de demeurer inaperçue . . . Monsieur Profitendieu, qu'Antoine observait du coin de l'oeil, ne put réprimer un sursaut: --Comment! avant de . . .>> (III,p.942)

It is standard in French quotations to include the attribution of reported speech within the quotation and even to finish the sentence with a qualifying clause as in, "Viens, dit à voix basse Bernard, en saisissant brusquement Olivier par le bras." (III,p.936) However, in both of the previous examples it would seem more consistant with grammatical rules to close the quotation or begin a new paragraph after the direct speech. These quotations have been abridged, but there are several intervening sentences between the actual instances of reported. This may seem an obscure even petty criticism that could simply be considered a stylistic quirk of the author if it appeared consistently. It does appear frequently but certainly not as often as the standard mode of presentation.

The narrator clearly oversteps his bounds and this is made all the more evident when followed by a dialogue neatly set off in traditional form with the narrator's intervention outside of the quotation marks. Whereas the first example cited above is devoid of quotation marks and includes the character's speech within the narrator's discourse, the second and third examples include the narrator within the characters' speech. The impression on the reader then is one of a permeability in the traditional boundary between narrator and characters. The purpose of this narrative impertinence will be more fully explained in the discussion of narrative voice, but it should be evident that the author

shows a high degree of sophistication in his use of dialogic presentation.

Furthermore it should be noted that it is not only speech as such that is reported directly, indirectly or in free indirect discourse, but the characters' thoughts as well. This is evident from the first line of the novel: "<<C'est le moment de croire que j'entends des pas dans le corridor>>, se dit Bernard." (III, p. 933) There is nothing unusual about these occurrences. They simply affirm the omniscience of the narrator.

Finally, there are numerous examples of what must surely be considered direct discourse that are written rather than spoken. They appear in the form of letters and Edouard's journal and are appropriately surrounded by quotation marks as are the instances of reported speech. Also, within both the letters and Edouard's journal, there are other examples of reported speech, direct and indirect. Edouard's journal even contains a few examples of free indirect discourse.

Qu'est-ce que tu veux faire avec ça? dis-je en le lui rendant. C'est trop vieux. Ça ne peut plus servir.

Il protesta que si; que, du reste, les guides plus récents coûtaient beaucoup trop cher, et que "pour ce qu'il en ferait" les cartes de celui-ci pourraient tout aussi bien lui servir. (III, p. 1000)

These examples offer nothing new in terms of narrative technique, but they are interesting because they occur at one further remove from the primary level of narration.

Narrative Voice

It is obvious from the previous discussion that narrative voice is quite complex in Les Faux-Monnayeurs and, in fact, difficult to separate from dialogue in certain cases. The concept of narrative voice is often evoked to cover a variety of phenomena within a text. It essentially involves the agent of narration, that is, who is telling the story at a given moment in the text.

The paradigmatic nineteenth century realist narrator and addressed the reader as an omniscient third person, tending toward the purely objective style of a historian or, as Stendhal would have it, a narrator whose status resembled that of the author of public registry. Obviously, the movement toward objectivity of the narrating instance is only tendential and, even in such purified texts as those of Balzac, Stendhal and Flaubert, a certain subjectivity pierces through in the form of value judgements concerning characters, anthropomorphic descriptions of inanimate objects and, in a more fundamental sense, in terms of the ordering of the text. Furthermore, these novels often contain other agents of narration who are characters in the

novel, whether they be extraneous to the plot or directly concern its exposition.

First-person narrative was very popular in the eighteenth century French novel and among the Romantics. These narratives often pretended to an objective origin as historical fact with an introduction or frame narrative by the author claiming to transcribe the memoirs of a real or imaginary person, an intimate diary or letters. The first-person narrator was often, though not always, the protagonist of the novel. Vivienne Mylne indicates that the reason for these false claims to objective origin was primarily to ensure verisimilitude.³

The novel had an ambiguous status as, on the one hand, a product of the imagination like poetry and, on the other hand, written in prose like history or an essay. The first person narrative, especially when the narrator was the protagonist, presented an additional problem of proper narrative distance. It is a delicate balance to strike between self-indulgence and self flagellation. The first-person narrator was obliged to maintain a certain distance from himself as a character through irony yet not allow the irony to become parodic to the extent that the narrator was completely undermined. Furthermore, his knowledge of other characters was necessarily limited to analysis of their actions and words in his presence. The narrator might speculate about the thoughts and motivations of other

characters and he could point to telling contradictions between their actions and words but he could never realistically enter into their minds. One way to circumvent this problem was for the narrator to overhear conversations or find letters or diaries, but these indiscretions were often unreliable because they were conditioned by the person to whom they were addressed and indeed were intentionally used to confuse the narrator. The epistolary novel was another attempt to deal with these problems because it presented multiple narrators viewing the same events from different perspectives. Les Liaisons dangereuses is a brilliant example of this technique.

The third-person omniscient narrator of the realist school attempted to resolve these problems by establishing the fixed distance of a historian to his historical subject and by shifting the idea of verisimilitude from an exterior guarantee of truth to an interior accuracy in the portrayal of human emotions, words and actions. The omniscient narrator not only could maintain an intimate relationship with all of his characters but was also free to move from character to character in different places without having to justify his presence. This allowed him to develop a richer, more detailed social context.

Realism placed heavy emphasis on observation of physical detail, of exterior phenomena as a sufficient and truer means of rendering brute reality. Characters were

revealed through their actions and words and, to a certain extent, through their physical appearance, but not through their innermost subjective being as the Romantics would have it. Albert Béguin, in his L'Ame romantique et le rêve, eloquently expressed the subjective mysticism of the Romantics whose ultimate truth was attained through an intuition of the true significance of life beyond the mask of exterior phenomena.⁴ They reasoned inductively from a particular case, an individual's perception of the world, to a general conclusion about the nature of reality for all individuals. The realists, on the other hand, reasoned deductively from a general set of circumstances, a collective or common perception of the world, to conclusions about the character and motives of individuals.

The Romantics gave focus to their narrative through the individual subject's apprehension of the world, whereas the realists sought a unifying principle in the objective observation of a multiple experience of reality as observed through the five senses. It is easy to see that the relationship between narrator and reader would be different in the two. Rather than a direct expression of emotion and motive, an indirect expression of these subjective experiences through observable detail.

The Naturalists, like Zola, under the influence of positive science, carried the objective observation of reality to a pseudo-scientific extreme. They used scientific

principles of heredity and environment to guide the development of their characters and plots. They presented their stories as case histories of laboratory experiments that served to confirm their preconceived notions of social life. The tautology of their pseudo-scientific governing principles soon became evident and the Naturalist school began to fall apart. What remained was the lyricism and the pathos of man's tragic struggle against fate, in this case biological and social determinism.⁵

André Gide was certainly familiar with the history of the novel, not only in France, but throughout the continent, as a perusal of his Journal shows. He greatly admired Dostoevsky and Joseph Conrad and was instrumental in bringing their work to the attention of the French public. These two writers were very much in his mind as he was writing Les Faux-Monnayeurs. There was also a tragic fatality in their novels, but it was the product of a psychological realism that reached to depths yet unexplored by Gide's contemporaries. Conrad and Dostoevsky laid bare the subjective experience of man's desperate search for truth and values in a degraded world, but without the sentimentality and self-indulgence of the Romantics.

Gide experimented with different forms during his career. His very first novel, Les Cahiers d'André Walter, was an intense lyrical confession presented in the form of an intimate journal written by a feverish young author

documenting a spiritual journey. Les Cahiers d'André Walter was presented as a real journal written by a real person; Gide's name was completely absent from the original publication. Already in this early novel, Gide is playing with the narrative instance by using framing techniques. There is an introduction and brief biography of André Walter by Pierre Louys and a novel within the novel which reflects back directly on its author, André Walter. In his next novel, Paludes, Gide gives free reign to his bent for ironic distancing by shifting from a third-person to a first-person narrative concerning a nameless young author who is writing a novel called Paludes. L'Immoraliste is a highly structured and stylized first-person narrative within a frame. La Porte étroite is a third-person narrative that depends heavily on letters and diaries thus diminishing the role of the primary narrator. Isabelle has a frame in the first-person but the primary narrative is in the third-person with the narrator as a secondary character in the plot. Les Caves du Vatican has a third-person narrator who frequently intervenes with first-person commentary. Finally, La Symphonie pastorale is told by a first-person narrator writing a journal and telling his story as it happens to him.

It should be obvious from these varied experiments with the mode of narration that Gide accorded great importance to the narrative instance. His conclusions upon beginning Les Faux-Monnayeurs were that none of his previous writing

qualified as novels and that a true novel needed to be told from multiple perspective. Already, in 1910, while composing a preface for Isabelle, Gide wrote,

Pourquoi j'eus soin d'intituler «récit» ce petit livre? Simplement parce qu'il ne répond à l'idée que je me fais du roman; . . . Le roman, tel que je le reconnais ou l'imagine, comporte une diversité de points de vue, soumise à la diversité des personnages qu'il met en scène; c'est par essence une oeuvre déconcertée. (OC VI, p.361-362)

Furthermore, during the elaboration of his novel, Gide decided to create what might be called a novelistic paradigm. He decided to purify his novel by eliminating extraneous elements not specific to the form such as physical portraits, more adequately accomplished by painting and photography, or common speech, more adequately rendered by a phonograph. (OC VII, p.41) At the same time he multiplied the modes of narration, that is to say he multiplied the narrators.

There are a variety of ways in which a narrator makes his presence known. The first-person narrator is obviously part of the action and is expected to comment on events and draw conclusions which may be shared with another character, but ostensibly speaking to the reader or interposed interlocutor alone. A true third-person narrator, although his narration is intended for the reader alone, never addresses him directly.

There should be a net separation between 'récit' and 'discours,' that is, between the objective events of the story as recounted by the historical narrator and the subjective speech of characters within the story. As a general rule, although the discours may contain elements of the récit, the récit may not contain discours without ceasing to be récit.⁶ This ideal state described by the structuralists would be difficult to find in literature. Even new novelists such as Robbe-Grillet, who pretended early on to be writing objective prose, found themselves obliged to renounce this idea.⁷

The narrator's place in third-person narration, besides reporting and summarizing speech and events, is analysis and commentary. To give the illusion of objectivity one might denude the text of literary devices such as imagery, metaphor and perhaps even metonymy, but it would be difficult, within the confines of a published text, to avoid the impression of an ordering principle, a subjective intentionality that chooses and orders events for a reader.

There is no doubt that Gide was aware of the problems of narrative voice and their importance within the novel. He considered multiple perspective to be a prerequisite of the novel form and this is one of the reasons that he labeled his previous writings differently. In Les Faux-Monnayeurs he has a primary narrator who is not entirely omniscient and a secondary narrator, Edouard, who is one of the main

characters. The primary narrator offers the reader a variety of commentaries and analyses, both as a typical realist third-person narrator and, at times, as a first-person narrator. He is at times omniscient, as in examples already cited where he comments on the innermost thoughts of his characters or when he describes character traits based on a deeper familiarity with a character than has been shown to the reader. For example, "Habile à séduire et habitué à plaire, Passavant avait besoin de sentir en face de lui un miroir complaisant, pour briller." (III,p.1167) Or again, at the beginning of the novel, speaking of Lucien Bercaïl,

On le sent faible; il ne semble exister que par le cœur et l'esprit . . . Que Lucien fasse des vers, chacun s'en doute; pourtant Olivier est, je crois bien, le seul à qui Lucien découvre ses projets.
(III,p.937)

The narrator analyzes Lucien's personality before allowing him to speak and his analysis is not only directly in the first person but undermines his presumed omniscience. Later his lack of omniscience is clearly stated in the phrase, "Je ne sais trop comment Vincent et lui [Passavant] se sont connus." (III,p.960)

The narrator's commentary and analysis is often in the form of a generalization based on the actions or motivations of a particular character.

Lorsqu'on a le coeur bien en place et qu'une saine education vous a inculqué de bonne heure le sens des responsabilités, on ne fait pas un enfant à une femme sans se sentir quelque peu engagé vis-à-vis d'elle, surtout lorsque cette femme a quitté son mari pour vous suivre. (III,p.960)

An intervention of this sort by the narrator borders on the didactic tending to abstract the character as a universal type, using him as a springboard for moralizing, but by shifting from the impersonal third person to a 'vous' at the end Gide gives the impression that it is Vincent's conscience speaking rather than the narrator thereby posing the moral generalization but avoiding overt didacticism. The "quelque peu engagé vis-à-vis d'elle" is a devastating indictment of Vincent and the narrator later pitilessly unveils the self-serving logic of the callous lover's detachment.

By contrast, describing the meeting between Olivier and Edouard at the train station, the narrator generalizes about a character trait that nephew and uncle share,

. . . une singulière incapacité de jauger son crédit dans le coeur et l'esprit d'autrui leur était commune et les paralysait tous deux; de sorte que chacun se croyait seul ému, tout occupé par sa joie propre et comme confus de la sentir si vive, n'avait souci que de ne point trop en laisser paraître l'excès. (III,p.991)

This commonly shared trait of self-absorption and timidity is amply demonstrated by the scene that follows. Here the

narrator supplies the reader with an insight into the foibles of two characters who are unaware of what is happening to them. This is of course the classic role of the narrator in psychological realism.

The most obvious example of narrative commentary is the entire seventh chapter of the second part. Here the narrator addresses the reader directly and the narration is effectively abandoned for a retrospective discussion of the characters and their actions up to that point in the novel. "Ainsi l'auteur imprévoyant s'arrête un instant, reprend souffle, et se demande où va le mener son récit." (III,p.1108) He analyses the foibles of his characters, regrets certain actions they have taken and speculates vaguely on their future. Although the narrator accepts responsibility for the creation of his characters, they are now presented as self-perpetuating entities who, like Pirandello's six characters, must live their story.

Je ne les cherchais point; c'est en suivant Bernard et Olivier que je les ai trouvés sur ma route. Tant pis pour moi; désormais je me dois à eux. (III,p.1111)

In a sense the roles have been reversed and the novel turned inside out. The narrator, instead of being the puppetmaster, has created subjective beings and is a prisoner of his own creation. Like a fallen god he becomes the hapless spectator to his characters' destiny. Whereas in

the first part the narrator frequently spoke in the first person singular or plural, from this point the narrator progressively withdraws into the role of an objective reporter, following the inexorable progress of his characters, no longer speaking in his own name except to refer to events in the first two parts.

Finally, as an interesting counterpoint to the primary narrator whose fictitious characters have gained a reality of their own, Edouard, as the narrator of his journal, seems to reduce ostensibly real characters to a fictive status. He easily abstracts their actions into generalizations, such as his discussion of "Le Régime Cellulaire" in reference to family life. (III,p.1021) He quickly slides from a description of his moribund love affair with Laura to a general discussion of the decrystallization of love. (III,p.988) Both of these discussions are to take their place within the novel he is writing. Describing his first encounter with his nephew Georges at the book store, he writes, "Il sera difficile, dans Les Faux-Monnayeurs, de faire admettre que celui qui jouera ici mon personnage ait pu, tout en restant en bonnes relations avec sa soeur, ne connaître point ses enfants." (III,p.1001) Edouard even sees himself as a character in a novel.

Les Faux-Monnayeurs offers the widest possible variety of narrative commentary and analysis--psychological analysis of individual character traits and a broader analysis of the

psychological mechanism of motives. Gide wrote in his Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs

Je fus amené, tout en l'écrivant, à penser que l'intimité, la pénétration, l'investigation psychologique peut, à certains égards, être poussée plus avant dans le 'roman' que dans les 'confessions.' (OC VII, p.27)

There is also considerable analysis of character types leading to generalizations concerning social groups (families, adolescents, people in love); moral judgements of individuals and groups; and analysis of characters from a literary point of view. There is also a variety of modes of analysis, from retrospective commentary on language or action to prospective analysis of actions yet to come; and from directly subjective commentary in the first person, as illustrated above, to objective third-person analysis.

Certainly Gide attempted to refract the story of Les Faux-Monnayeurs by playing with the possibilities of narrative voice. In a letter written to Roger Martin du Gard soon after the publication of Les Faux-Monnayeurs Gide said, "L'indice de réfraction m'importe plus que la chose réfractée."⁸ The primary narrator's status depends not on the quantity of information that he imparts in relation to other possible sources of narration, but rather on the distance that separates him from the narration. To use Gérard Genette's terminology, there is a primary extra-

diegetic narrator--the one who begins the novel as a third-person omniscient narrator--and a secondary intra-diegetic narrator, Edouard, who narrates his journal.

Within the primary narration, besides Edouard, there are a number of what may be called tertiary narrators such as Olivier, Bernard, Lillian, Vincent, Laura, Passavant, Sophroniska and La Pérouse. These characters recount, through speech or letters, parts of the story, often giving background information about themselves or other characters, sometimes providing a different version of previously narrated events or they simply take charge of the narration.

Lillian tells Vincent a long story about the shipwreck of the Bourgogne in which she almost drowned and learned a valuable lesson in self-preservation. As an interesting epilogue to this story, Lillian finally drowns while traveling with Vincent in Africa, possibly killed by Vincent. This is told in a letter from Alexandre Vedel to his brother Armand who, for unexplained reasons, gives the letter to Olivier to read, but none of them is aware of the true identity of Vincent who has finally gone mad.

Laura and Edouard reminisce about a former lodger at the Pension Vedel tens years earlier, the mysterious Victor Strouvilhou. The story is told in a dialogue between Edouard and Laura that Edouard has transcribed in his journal and that, as the reader sees it, is being read by Bernard who has stolen Edouard's suitcase. Edouard's journal also

contains a story that the old La Pérouse has told him about his son's illicit relationship with Boris's mother. This story is later filled in when Edouard meets the psychiatrist Sophroniska who is treating Boris for a nervous disorder.

Lillian tells Passavant the story of Laura and Vincent's tragic relationship, previously told to her by Vincent, adding to a summary version of the same story told by the narrator. The story is finally completed with Laura's letter to Edouard in which she tells her own version of the same story including her last desperate meeting with Vincent on the stairs of his apartment; a meeting that Olivier overheard and told to Bernard while little brother Georges was eavesdropping. Bernard later fills Olivier in on his brother's infamy in a letter.

Olivier tells Bernard of his first encounter with his uncle, Edouard who had dropped in by surprise the previous autumn to visit his half-sister Pauline. Later there is a description of this same lunch in Edouard's journal.

The narrator tells of a number of delinquent incidents in young Georges Molinier's life, to which are added incidents reported by his mother Pauline, the old Azais, Albéric Profitendieu, Edouard in his journal and Edouard's narrator in the story he gives Georges to read.

Vincent's Darwinian zoology lesson about predators and victims in the sea and about deep sea fish that project their own light to see in the dark depths, told to Lillian

Griffith and Passavant, reappears later in a letter from Olivier to Bernard; however, Olivier attributes these ideas to Passavant. Olivier's letter near the end of the second part moreover bridges the gap in his and Passavant's story since they last appeared. Similarly, Bernard's letter to Olivier at the beginning of the second part picks up the narration where it left off and brings the reader up to date.

The characters speak, in their own voices, as it were, through the primary narrator and also through the secondary narration of Edouard's journal. The difference between these two seemingly identical representations of direct speech is both formal and pragmatic. The omniscient narrator's reports of direct speech must be accepted as the words of the characters who speak. However, those reported by Edouard, the intra-diegetic narrator, may be questioned as fabrications filtered through the subjectivity of a character in the novel. Edouard even admits to his fabrication of dialogue by interspersing them with parenthetical comments such as, "Je ne cherche pas à transcrire ses propres paroles . . ." (III, p.1000); ". . . (je crois bien qu'il m'a dit cela aussi platement)." (III, p.1005); "(Je crois que je cite exactement.)" (III, p.1014) Furthermore, it is evident that Edouard's journal is a working version of his novel and that his presentation of

events and words is therefore suspect. During the story of his first encounter with Georges he writes,

Nécessaire d'abrégé beaucoup cet épisode. La précision ne doit pas être obtenu par le détail du récit, mais bien dans l'imagination du lecteur, par deux ou trois traits, exactement à la bonne place. (III,p.1000)

Edouard later states, in a conversation with Bernard, Laura and Sophroniska, that everything that has happened to him the past year is material for his novel and that he is keeping a record in his journal. (III,p.1081)

Fragmentation of the Narrative

Les Faux-Monnayeurs contains a primary and a secondary narrator and a series of characters who, through dialogue or letters recount portions of the story. If the doubling of the primary narrator with a secondary one is unusual, the use of characters to report parts of the story in their own voices is a common feature of many novels. Gide merely exploits this possibility to an extreme and, by having the same events recounted by different characters, he draws attention to this properly novelistic technique that Mikhail Bakhtin was to call heteroglossia.⁹

But there is much more to be said about the voices that

speak to the reader of Les Faux-Monnayeurs and Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia goes beyond the narrative instance:

Les problèmes qui se posent à l'auteur et à sa conscience dans le roman polyphonique sont beaucoup plus complexes et profonds que ceux qu'on trouve dans le roman homophonique (monologique). L'unité du monde d'Einstein est plus profond et plus complexe que celle de Newton, c'est une unité d'un ordre supérieur (une unité qualitativement différent).¹⁰

There is a variety of voices that speak through these narrator's that have already been identified. The primary narration is by no means pure and homogeneous. It often slides into the thoughts or speech of the characters by free indirect discourse, but more often it assumes an ironic stance or even a parodic tenor that isn't immediately attributable to any specific character. Who should the reader assume is speaking when the modernist narrator of our novel who has already shown himself to be cynical and detached says,

Déjà, la douce rive de son pays natal est en vue, mais, à travers la brume, il faut un oeil exercé pour la voir. Pas un nuage au ciel, où le regard de Dieu va sourire. (III,p.975)

The romantic lyricism of this passage is in stark contrast to the normal detached narration.

The primary narrator has also included a selection of epigraphs that precede certain chapters in the novel. These epigraphs, appropriately attributed to their authors, serve a double function. In principle they would give a focus or a theme to the chapter that follows, orienting the reader's understanding of the events to follow. This is not always the case though. The first quote, from Paul Desjardin's book on Poussin, concerns the artist's abandonment of and total indifference to his parents. One might think that the narrator is preparing the reader for a similar action on the part of Bernard, but it seems to be more a reflection of Bernard's attitude upon leaving his home and, judging from the letter he writes to his putative father, his attitude is anything but indifferent. Later there is a quote from Shakespeare concerning bastards that would have seemed more appropriate as an epigraph to the previously mentioned chapter. Another chapter is preceded by the Shakespeare quote, "Plenty and peace breeds cowards; hardness ever of hardness is mother." (III, p.951) This remark seems to characterize Bernard's bravado more than it truly characterizes him or his situation. Most of these quotes seem to be other refractions of meaning. They also serve to situate the text within a larger context of literature and history.

However, it isn't only the primary narrator who appropriates other voices. Bernard is particularly

susceptible and quite conscious of the fact that he expresses himself through the words of others. In his attempt to express his love to Laura he finally says,

Ah! si vous saviez ce que c'est enrageant d'avoir dans la tête des tas de phrases de grands auteurs, qui viennent irrésistiblement sur vos lèvres quand on veut exprimer un sentiment sincère.
(III,p.1091)

Bernard is plagued by this problem throughout the novel, as is Olivier. While speaking with Olivier about one of the questions on his exam, Bernard first becomes pedantic in tone then polemic and moralistic as he denounces the state of literature in France. "Avec de pareilles idées, on empoisonne la France." (III,p.1143) Bernard's phrase was in response to Olivier's statement that he had taken from Passavant, ". . . que la vérité, c'est l'apparence, que le mystère c'est la forme, et que ce que l'homme a de plus profond, c'est sa peau." (III,p.1142) Passavant himself, the narrator tells us, had gotten this phrase from Paul Ambroise. Olivier frequently quotes Passavant and adopts his cynical tone in speaking. The letter that he writes to Bernard from Corsica is, in the words of the narrator, a "lettre de parade." (III,p.1105) Passavant also blatantly steals phrases and ideas from others. "Tout ce qui n'était pas imprimé, était pour Passavant de bonne prise; ce qu'il

appelait 'les idées dans l'air,' c'est-à-dire: celles d'autrui." (III,p.1142)

Despite his claims to the contrary, Edouard appropriates the ideas of others and expresses himself under the influence of others. He claims to have written his previous book under the influence of Laura, and it is because of his love for Olivier that he is writing something totally different. He also frequently refers to philosophers and writers to give added weight to his opinions and expand their meaning. He uses economic and musical terminology to express his ideas concerning literary phenomena.

It is clear that Les Faux-Monnayeurs is a text composed of many disparate textual elements. There is constant reference to real texts and to imaginary texts that exist solely within the novel. The sheer extent of intertextual reference in this novel is a comment on the nature of novels that Roland Barthes was later to describe as, ". . . a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings . . . blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centers of culture."¹¹ The art of the prose writer lies in the composition, the ordering of these disparate elements into a significant whole.

En étudiant la question de la raison d'être de l'oeuvre d'art, on arrive à trouver que cette raison suffisante, ce symbole de l'oeuvre, c'est sa composition." (OC II,p.424)

Through the fragmentation of narrative the author is able to distance himself from the unified point of view of a single character and thereby represent the world as a function of perspective. Bahktin, following the logic of this distancing effect, says that the prose writer not only distances himself from the languages of his characters, but in so doing he distances himself from and thereby reifies language.

The author does not speak in a given language . . . but he speaks . . . through language, a language that has somehow more or less materialized, become objectivized, that he merely ventriloquates."¹²

This, in effect, is a different order of mimesis that goes beyond the mere representation of speech or events that may ring true to life in the mind of the reader. It is a representation of the process by which events and speech in the real world are given meaning. Linda Hutcheon writes,

Le 'réalisme psychologique' du début du XXe siècle, que la conscience auto-centrique des romantiques avait rendu possible, a élargi, encore une fois à travers une sorte de mouvement dialectique, le sens de la mimésis romanesque au point d'y inclure aussi bien le processus que le produit.¹³

Gide was by no means the first writer to attempt to represent the process of perception. James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and John Dos Passos were perhaps his most prominent

contemporaries to experiment with fragmented narrative voice. Woolf and Joyce both attempted to render the fragmentary, discontinuous nature of perception through stream of consciousness narrative.

Pour Gide comme pour Dos Passos la structuration du roman s'impose en raison même des aspects chaotiques et fuyants (ou artificiellement ordonnés) de l'existence.¹⁴

Gide's project was somewhat different in that he was constructing a paradigm novel that was to be not only a novel within a novel, but a novel of the novelist and a novel about the novel.

Bahktin says that novels, "foreground a critique of literary discourse . . ." and further states that this "auto-criticism of discourse is one of the primary distinguishing features of the novel as a genre. Discourse is criticized in its relationship to reality: its attempt to faithfully reflect reality, to manage reality and to transpose it . . ."¹⁵ This is, in effect, Edouard's project: "Ce que je veux, c'est présenter d'une part la réalité, présenter d'autre part cet effort pour la styliser . . ." (III,p.1081) Later in the same conversation Edouard declares that the subject of his novel is, "la lutte entre les faits proposés par la réalité, et la réalité idéale." (III,p.1082)

Bahktin identifies two types of novels that foreground discourse: those whose subject is a character living life

through literature, as is the case with Don Quixote and Madame Bovary, and those whose subject is a real author writing a novel, as in Tristram Shandy or Jacques le fataliste. From the previous discussion, it is evident that Les Faux-Monnayeurs falls into both categories. The primary narrator speaks in his own name and discusses his characters with the reader. He is doubled by the secondary narrator, Edouard, who discusses the problems of his novel which is ostensibly the journal we are reading. Edouard also is a character living his life through literature and in this double role he bridges the gap between the primary narrator and the other characters whose perception of themselves and the events in their lives is mediated through literature. Edouard is a prime example of what Gide called the reverse sincerity of the artist: "Il doit, non pas raconter sa vie telle qu'il l'a vécue, mais la vivre telle qu'il la racontera." (JAG I, p.29) The world becomes a pretext for narration; the chaos of events, speech and human emotions is given a form by the novelist.

Finally, there is a process of incorporation of other genres within Les Faux-Monnayeurs. The novel itself may be viewed, at different moments, as an epistolary novel, as a memoir style novel, as a first-person narrative or as a third-person narrative. Other literary genres are represented as well, such as Edouard's novel fragment that he reads to Georges, or Armand's poetry and the La Fontaine

stanza, or Passavant's literary manifesto, or the novel in journal form that Edouard's journal represents. There are a myriad of quotes from literary sources, not only within the text, as cited by various characters, but outside of the narration proper as it were, in the epigraphs that begin a number of chapters. There are scientific discourses within the text as represented by Vincent's botany and biology lessons. There are fragments of philosophical texts (Descartes, Kant and Nietzsche), history texts (Lucien Febvre), biography (Desjardins), and political journals (Action Française). There is ample reference to Freudian psychology and to economic discourse.

We also know from a perusal of Gide's other works, particularly his Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs, his Journal and Si le grain ne meurt that there are elements in his novel that come from real historical events, either read in newspapers or in his own experience. Les Faux-Monnayeurs seems to be a conglomerate cultural document with Gide as the central subject, the subjective organizing principle.

But André Gide is not content to present the reader with polyphonic discourse; he demands the reader's active participation in the text. He is able to draw the reader into the text by creating an illusion with a series of textual mirrors, a seemingly endless series of reduplications performed using a narrative technique known as the *mise en abyme*.

NOTES

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10. Ibid., p. 27.
11. Roland Barthes, Image, Music, Text, (trans. Steven Heath), New York, Hill and Wang, 1977, p.146.
12. Bakhtine, p.299.
13. Linda Hutcheon, "Modes et formes du narcissisme littéraire," Poétique, no.29, 1977, p.97.
14. Michel Zeraffa, Personne et personnage, Paris, Klincksieck, 1969, p.102.
15. Bakhtine, p.412.

CHAPTER 5

LA MISE EN ABYME

History and Use of the Term

The most current usage of the term 'mise en abyme' today designates an esthetic procedure of self reflection. This notion, as a principle of narrative construction, was elaborated for the first time by André Gide in his Journal in 1893. Gide didn't really invent this narrative strategy, but he refined it and brought it to its highest point of development so far, as I shall attempt to show in this chapter.

The mise en abyme didn't attract very much attention in Gide's time and was little understood and utilized, judging from the critical reaction to Les Faux-Monnayeurs. It resurfaced years later in the literary criticism surrounding the New Novel. Jean Ricardou, in a statement at Cerisy, claims the mise en abyme as a quality of the New Novel

Je crois que la plupart des livres du Nouveau Roman contiennent, d'une façon ou d'une autre, une mise en abyme ou plusieurs, ou même, de continuelles mises en abyme. Cette réduction, cette image du livre dans le livre . . . a . . .

la singulière fonction de souligner que le roman n'a de rapport avant tout qu'avec lui-même.¹

This term was on the lips of numerous critics during the nineteen-sixties, especially those of the Tel Quel 'tendency,' and, like an Yves St. Laurent design, it spread throughout the literary ready-made circles. Critics found mises en abyme everywhere there was a mirror or another reflecting surface, a reference to language or to literature or an authorial intrusion. Bruce Morrisette, the first critic to write of mise en abyme in the New Novel, finally felt obliged to put a stop to this mania in an article published in Comparative Literature Studies in 1971.² Morrisette deploras the indiscriminate use of the term by critics and endeavors to bring it back to its proper perspective. However, while pleading for more rigour in the attribution of the term to define a literary work, he himself remains rather vague as to the specificity of the term, giving a series of comparisons. He calls it alternately an analogy, a duplication, a reflection, a repetition, and a leitmotif, bringing the conscientious critic back to the point of departure. Quoting himself in his early critical remarks on the New Novel, he tries to show the limitations of his intentions, but one doesn't ever define the nature of the mise en abyme. His greatest merit is to refer to the 'Charte' in Gide's Journal, so putting readers on the right track.

The term 'mise en abyme' comes from the pen of Claude Edmonde Magny. In a chapter of her book Histoire du roman français entitled "La 'mise en abyme' ou le chiffre de la transcendance," she writes this about Les Faux-Monnayeurs

. . . il est facile de voir quelle infinité de miroirs parallèles, quelle 'espace du dedans' ce procédé introduit au sein même de l'oeuvre . . . avec quelle attirance, quelle vertige métaphysique nous nous penchons sur cet univers de reflets qui s'ouvre brusquement à nos pieds; bref, quelle illusion de mystère et de profondeur produisent nécessairement ces histoires dont la structure est ainsi 'en abyme', du mot si heureusement choisi par les héraldistes.³

Magny likens the notion of mise en abyme to a paradox or a vicious circle. She quotes the classic paradox of Epimenides the Cretan, "All Cretans are liars,- I am a Cretan," and a more amusing example of the professor of eloquence whose student refuses to pay him unless he wins his first case. In order to settle his fee, the professor is obliged to take his novice lawyer to court. In the six pages of this chapter, Magny formulates three types of mise en abyme: simple reflection, like the coat of arms within the coat of arms; infinite reflection, referring to mathematical models or to parallel mirrors; and paradoxical reflection, as something contained in another thing it is supposed to contain.

Pierre Lafille, another major Gide critic, speaks of Gide's ". . . 'composition en abyme', suivant la

terminologie du blason pour désigner la reproduction réduite, au coeur de l'écusson, de l'écusson lui-même."⁴ Lafille then raises a fundamental problem of this narrative procedure

Les occasions ne sont pas rares où la double révolution architecturale provoque une sorte de vertige et nécessite une réflexion attentive afin de savoir où l'on en est et qui, d'Edouard ou de Gide, conte.⁵

The four previously mentioned critics certainly are not incorrect in their similar assessments of Gide's master work, often using the same examples; but none of them explains in systematic fashion the parameters of the appearance, the process or the economy of the mise en abyme. In this chapter, I propose to explore the structure of this narrative procedure, using the works of two structuralist critics, Lucien Dällenbach and David Keypour, as points of departure. Dällenbach's brilliant and authoritative analysis of the mise en abyme in his Le Récit spéculaire will serve as a framework for a structural analysis of Les Faux-Monnayeurs. I certainly have no intention of reducing Gide's novel to a single concept, but rather to describe the structure of the narration, a formal description, before proceeding, in the following chapter, with an analysis of other key elements of the narration. The intent of this chapter is to show that there is a strong relationship

between this stylistic procedure, central to the novel, and the ethical notions of authenticity and sincerity expressed within. I contend that they come together in the whole problematic of language and thought.

Here is Gide's comment, commonly called the 'Charte,' from an 1893 entry in his Journal

J'aime assez qu'en une oeuvre d'art on retrouve ainsi transposé, à l'échelle des personnages, le sujet même de l'oeuvre. Rien ne l'éclaire mieux et n'établit plus sûrement les proportions de l'ensemble. Ainsi, dans les tableaux de Memling ou de Quentin Metzys, un petit miroir convexe et sombre reflète, à son tour, l'intérieur de la pièce où se joue la scène peinte. Ainsi dans le tableau des Ménines de Velasquez (mais un peu différemment). Enfin, en littérature, dans Hamlet, la scène de la comédie; et dans bien d'autres pièces. Dans Wilhelm Meister, les scènes de marionnettes ou de fête au château. Dans la Chute de la maison Usher, la lecture que l'on fait à Roderick, etc. Aucun de ces exemples n'est absolument juste. Ce qui le serait beaucoup plus, ce qui dirait mieux ce que j'ai voulu dans mes Cahiers, dans mon Narcisse et dans la Tentative, c'est la comparaison avec ce procédé du blason qui consiste, dans le premier, à en mettre un second 'en abyme'. (JAG I, p.41)

Let us summarize the primary points of this key text. First of all, the mise en abyme is a sort of reflection; its function is to clarify the work and establish its proportions; it is a procedure that has existed for a long time and is not limited to the novel; and, finally, its fundamental metaphor is a heraldic technique or procedure. 'En abyme', in this contexte, is a technical term taken from

the vocabulary of heraldry designating the image of a coat of arms that contains within a miniaturized reproduction of itself. Gide mentions his three works of fiction to date, but his next work, Paludes, is an even more striking example of this procedure. Paludes is narrated by a nameless novelist who is himself writing a novel called Paludes and which, according to the narrator, contains all of the events that we are reading.

Dällenbach warns the reader not to make broad associations with the mise en abyme such as the abyss, Heidegger's Abgrund, Ponge's objeu or Derrida's différance. He then proposes a basic definition: ". . . est mise en abyme tout enclave entretenant une relation de similitude avec l'oeuvre qui la contient."⁶ I shall follow Dällenbach's structural analysis very closely, replacing his numerous examples from other texts, when it is possible and pertinent, with examples from Les Faux-Monnayeurs.

As a point of departure, our critic appropriates three basic linguistic concepts from Roman Jakobson: 'énoncé', 'énonciation' and code. He states, ". . . une réflexion est un énoncé qui renvoie à l'énoncé, à l'énonciation ou au code du récit."⁷ We shall begin with a topology of the 'énoncé'.

The Mise en Abyme of the Statement

The question then is: If reflexivity is the foundation of any mise en abyme, what types of statements (énoncés) are likely to be reflected? Some examples are the theme, the plot, the events of the story, the agent of narration, the story of Les Faux-Monnayeurs, the esthetics of Les Faux-Monnayeurs and the criticism of Les Faux-Monnayeurs. This reflexive quality of certain elements of the text creates a semantic overload that operates on at least two levels: first on the level of the story itself, that is, the literal or directly referential sense; and second, in Dällenbach's words, "celui de la réflexion où il intervient comme élément d'une métasignification permettant au récit de se prendre pour thème."⁸ In other words, the statement in question is overdetermined and its referent both conceals and reveals a figurative sense.

We discern three types of reflexive statements in Gide's novel. The first category includes La Pérouse's perfect chord, the conversation between Strouvilhou and Passavant about literary 'value', Olivier and Bernard's conversation concerning the subject of Bernard's baccalauréat exam and Olivier's conversation with Armand about limits. Dällenbach calls this category intra-diegetic reflection because it remains within the narrative stream as an integral part of the exposition of characters and the

advancement of events while reflecting one of the primary themes of the novel which is the relationship between a literary text and exterior reality. Vincent's lessons on biology and botany are emblematic of the relationships between the strong and weak characters while presenting, at the same time, Vincent and especially the perverse pleasure of Lady Griffith and Passavant who see their ideas valorized. Passavant later uses one of Vincent's lessons as his own to make a point to Olivier about intellectual prowess. The discussion of the counterfeit coin that Bernard has found in Saas-Fee and all of the references to counterfeit money reflect the theme of authenticity. Edouard's notebook and his diary reflect the primary narrative instance, and so forth.

The second category of reflexive statement, Dällenbach calls metadiegetic, meaning that it occasions a suspension of the narration without totally liberating itself from narrative control. Lucien Bercaill tells his friend Olivier of his project for a fantasy play about the Luxembourg gardens, suspending the development of the plot that had just begun with Bernard's discovery of his illegitimate origins and his subsequent plans to run away. Bernard has just solicited Olivier's help and Olivier listens to Lucien's project distractedly, further setting off the tangential nature of Lucien's narration. The reader, of course, recognizes, within the description of this

emblematic play, the space of the novel he is reading. By the same token, Bernard's dream of an encounter with an angel steps outside the bounds of the narrative while at the same time reflecting the themes of authenticity, commitment and the devil. Armand's discourse on the extreme limits between being and non-being in which he gives Olivier a variety of examples involving death and damnation seems, at first glance, to have nothing to do with anything but Armand's own bizarre mental meanderings. However, later in the novel, a number of characters reach just these sorts of crucial limits--Vincent's madness, Olivier's attempted suicide and Boris' successful suicide. One of Armand's examples involves a life boat carrying six shipwreck victims, recalling Lillian's story of the sinking of the Bourgogne in which the life boat had reached the extreme limit of its capacity and the subsequent actions of the crew members which so profoundly affected Lillian's view of life. Edouard's journal also contains a number of similarly extra-diegetic statements, such as the conversation he overhears in the train between a mother and her child, leading him to reflect upon the terrible constrictions of family life and resultant self-complacency. His conversation with Laura about Victor Strouvilhou's confrontation with her father ten years earlier concerning the parable of the barren fig tree seems totally extraneous until the reader finally meets Strouvilhou. But Edouard's journal presents a problem in

that it is not the primary narration and therefore should, along with its contents, fall into a different category.

This third type of reflexive statement then is called the meta-narrative, told by a secondary narrator. Lady Griffith's story of the sinking of the Bourgogne fits this category, as does her letter to Passavant concerning her travels with Vincent and Alexandre's letter to Armand about his strange house guest whom only the reader recognizes as Vincent. Also, Olivier and Bernard's exchange of letters constitute independent narrations, as does Laura's first letter to Edouard. Edouard's journal is definitely a second narration that reflects back on the primary narration, but its sheer volume and complexity in terms of what it contains make it difficult to qualify. We will return to a discussion of Edouard's journal later.

A mise en abyme may be integrated into the text in several different ways; either as a single block, in pieces that alternate with the story or, finally, a variety of occurrences. It may also be placed in the chronological order of the story in three different ways; prospectively, reflecting beforehand the story to come; retrospectively, reflecting back on the story that has just been told; or finally, retro-prospectively, reflecting elements of the story by uncovering events previous and subsequent to its appearance in the story. This last example is obviously the most effective because it allows the author to not only

maintain interest in and pertinence to the developing plot but also to enrich the story with a double prospective and retrospective vector.

Gide uses all three possibilities to varying degrees, but it is certain that chapter seven of the second part is the strongest mise en abyme, forcing the reader to rethink all that has preceded while at the same time preparing him for what will follow in the third part. Dällenbach would like to exclude any direct intrusions of the narrator from his schema of valid mises en abyme, but in the case of Les Faux-Monnayeurs, if one follows David Keypour's reasoning on the metaleptic nature of Les Faux-Monnayeurs and the fundamentally ambiguous status of the narrator as such, Gide's novel is an exception to this rule.⁹ The narrator's intrusions are so pervasive and whimsical that he might be considered a character within the novel. One example of this double vector that doesn't involve narrative intrusion is Vincent's botany lesson concerning the relative strength of buds farthest from the 'family' trunk of the tree. This functions as a reduced model of the bastard theme, casting light on Bernard's situation retrospectively and prospectively in relation to the discussion of the family unit in Edouard's journal. Edouard's journal provides the reader with several other examples of this double vector movement, but we shall save examples of this until a fuller

explanation of the various qualities of the mise en abyme has been given.

Jean Ricardou makes a point that may seem obvious, but is crucial to further discussion of the nature of the mise en abyme

Si je considère la mise en abyme dans sa plus ample généralité, je constate qu'une nécessité régit ses dimensions: jamais, semble-t-il, la micro-histoire ne doit être plus longue que l'histoire qu'elle reflète, sous peine de devenir l'histoire reflétée. C'est dire que l'histoire contenue ne peut évoquer l'histoire contenante que sous l'espèce d'un résumé.¹⁰

It is obvious that the mise en abyme must be framed within the narration, and I shall return to framing techniques below in the discussion of enunciation. Besides the purely quantitative aspect of Ricardou's remark, it raises a related question concerning the effects of the distribution and the chronology of the reflexive statements in relation to the narration. Ricardou's remark suggests a parallel between the mise en abyme and another literary device known as the synecdoche where a part stands for the whole. Dällenbach speaks of a logic of transformations and distinguishes two steps in the passage from the narrated story to its reflection

. . . une réduction (ou structuration par enchâssement), une élaboration du paradigme de référence (ou structuration par projection sur

l'axe syntagmatique d'un 'équivalent'
métaphorique).¹¹

Vincent's aforementioned botany lesson functions along these lines as a reduced model of the bastard theme. Similarly, La Pérouse's perfect chord as a resolution of cacophony is a reduced model of the esthetic principle of the novel.

Based on the above description, it would seem that the mise en abyme is the epitome of a metonymic operation in that it is only discernable as such in relation to what precedes or follows it in the text. The paradigmatic dimension of the mise en abyme is both particularizing, compressing the signification of the fiction, and generalizing, permitting a semantic expansion that the text could not accomplish alone. The metaphoric relation between counterfeit money and fiction that recurs in the text relativizes the notion of fiction as a form of value that circulates within a social context subject to market forces, not so much a use value as an exchange value. Bernard, as a reduced model of the reader, after reading Edouard's journal, feels compelled to intervene because of his unique position and his subsequent attempt to aid Laura establishes a moral dimension to reading.

Gide is playing with the different possibilities that language offers. The mise en abyme allows him to play on two different levels. Emile Benveniste speaks of these two planes of discourse

Les unités de la langue relèvent, en effet, de deux plans: syntagmatique quand on les envisage dans leur rapport de succession matérielle au sein de la chaîne parlée, paradigmaticque quand elles sont posées en rapport de substitution possible, chacun à son niveau et dans sa classe formelle.¹²

This movement from the syntagmatic to the paradigmatic axis converts time into space, sequentiality into simultaneity, and in so doing, increases the reader's ability to understand not only the signification of the text he is reading, but the nature of texts in general. Michel Foucault writes, "Le discours . . . a le pouvoir de retenir la flèche, déjà lancée, en un retrait de temps qui est son espace propre."¹³ Bruce Morrisette quotes an interesting passage from a letter he received from Ricardou at the time of the publication of La Prise de Constantinople in which Ricardou talks about creation by structure and composition of the mise en abyme. "Le livre à faire est impossible-- paradoxal à tout instant. Il faut inventer un nouvel espace romanesque."¹⁴ It would seem that this novelistic space that Ricardou refers to is created by the spatio-temporal play of Les Faux-Monnayeurs.

The Mise en Abyme of the Enunciation

Enunciation is opposed to the statement in the same way that the process of fabrication is opposed to the thing

produced. If the mise en abyme of the statement reflects the result of an act of production, the mise en abyme of the enunciation reflects the agent or the process of that production.

Dällenbach lists three conditions of the mise en abyme of the enunciation: 1) the representation within the narration of a producer or a receiver of the story, 2) the representation of production or reception as such and 3) the manifestation of the context that conditions this production/reception.¹⁵

Gerald Prince has shown the plethora of writers and readers within Les Faux-Monnayeurs, as well as the multiplicity of contexts of production and reception.¹⁶ Passavant is, of course, a published novelist and essayist, as is Edouard. Lucien Bercaïl is a poet and is composing a play. Olivier is a poet and possible editor of Passavant's literary review. Olivier asks Bernard to contribute to the review, having previously read his writing. Armand Vedel is also a poet of sorts. Lillian Griffith finds Vincent's biology lessons to be as exciting as novels and Passavant tells Lillian that she should write novels after hearing her stories. There are any number of letter readers who not only read and interpret the letters addressed to them, but often pass them on to other readers to compare interpretations or simply to see their reaction. Sarah Vedel reads her father's diary metaphorically, seeing his contrition about smoking as

a reference to masturbation and asks Edouard to confirm her suspicions. Edouard is a reader of Passavant's novels and Passavant has read his. Bernard is the interposed reader of Edouard's journal, which we read along with him. Edouard gives Georges Molinier a passage from his novel to read, hoping to make him ashamed of his lying and stealing, only to find that Georges is flattered by the attention Edouard has given him. There are numerous references to reading novels. In the opening chapter, Dhurmer speaks disparagingly about a recent novel he has read, and Caloub Profitendieu reads adventure novels to console himself after his brother Bernard's abrupt departure. These are only the most obvious examples and we shall have occasion to return to some of them later.

Another primary reader is of course the narrator who has obviously read Edouard's journal and comments on its style as well as its content. It would be useful, at this point, to look more closely at the relationship that develops between Edouard and the narrator in order to show how this *mise en abyme* functions in relation to the narration.

Edouard's journal and the novel of the narrator complement one another in relation to the story we read. Edouard's journal, for instance, establishes the proper link between past and present; that is its external function. It permits the reader to date certain events in relation to

others, but the dating is strictly limited to the reader's need to understand a basic chronology. This 'mirror' with which Edouard walks about is a trick mirror in that it serves not only to capture the present but also to recapture the past. The story as told solely by Edouard's journal or solely by the narrator would be too fragmented to understand, so they alternate and relay one another, filling in the gaps left by the other. David Keypour has correctly remarked that after Edouard's appearance in the novel the narrator, quite mobile in the beginning, limits himself to the story of the children and adolescents, leaving the adults and the families to Edouard.¹⁷

Edouard's journal has a double function--first, to bring the reader out of his habitual passive role by presenting him with a divergent point of view; and second, a centralizing function in a story told from multiple perspective. This second function prevents a total disintegration of the narrative voice. The journal also fulfills a function of philosophical reflection through Edouard's long monologues in which general thoughts transcend particular facts. However, as the novel progresses, the monologues gradually diminish to become pure speculative reflection based on minimal observation.¹⁸

But the fundamental difference between the journal and the narrator's story lies in the relationship between the two narrators and their respective characters. Edouard can

report letters, conversations, even the intimate diary of another character, but he doesn't have the power to report the monologues of other characters. The consciousness of these characters remains opaque to him. This point is brought home several different times. Edouard totally misunderstands Olivier's intentions when the two of them meet in the train station; he is frustrated in Saas-Fée not to know what Bernard is thinking; and his most abject failure is when he endeavors to influence young Georges' behavior by presenting him with a fragment of his novel modeled after Georges. Edouard seems to be able to understand the minds of his peers much better than his juniors, and this is perhaps another good reason why he not only increasingly focuses his journal on the adults and the families, as Keypour remarked, but, inasmuch as the adolescents are the only characters who seem to possess evolving mentalities as opposed to the fixed, even moribund consciousness of the adults, he is also lead into sterile abstraction. The situation is somewhat complicated by the fact that the primary narrator, although able to enter into the consciousness of his characters, often refuses to do so or pretends to be unable to.

The narrator, "en tant qu'instance fonctionnelle et linguistique est le sujet de toute énonciation non écrite."¹⁹ He is the one who says, at the beginning of the novel, "C'est le moment de croire que j'entends des pas dans

le corridor, se dit Bernard." (III,p.933) It is he who says, "Que Lucien fasse des vers, chacun s'en doute; pourtant Olivier est, je crois, le seul à qui Lucien découvre ses projets." (III,p.937) All of chapter seven of the second part is the narrator speaking. The constant intrusion of the narrator in the text poses several problems in relation to the typical realist novel; all the more because there is a movement back and forth from historical narration to what Keypour calls live reporting. By deftly playing with linguistic shifters, verb tenses and free indirect speech, Gide is able to blend the different levels of narration such that we are obliged to ask, along with Pierre Lafille: Who is speaking? Keypour puts it this way

Gide introduit entre la narration historique et le reportage en direct des scènes de conversation qui restreignent le champ de vision et agissent sur la conscience du lecteur comme autant de gros plans cinématographiques. Le passé, lié à la voix du narrateur, s'abolit dans l'intemporalité d'une scène représentée, scène visuelle dont l'expression verbale ne peut recouvrir que la forme du présent.²⁰

Keypour gives the following example

Monsieur Profitendieu gagna, en chancelant, un fauteuil. Il eut voulu réfléchir, mais les idées tourbillonnaient confusément dans sa tête. De plus, il ressentait un petit pincement du côté droit, là, sous ses côtes; il n'y couperait pas; c'était la crise de foie. Y avait-il seulement de l'eau de Vichy à la maison? (III,p.944)

From historic narration in the simple past and the past anterior, Gide slides into the imperfect, then uses the shifter "là" which is a signal not only to the present tense, but could only logically be linked to a gesture. The conditional mood that follows is indirect reported speech, setting up the final sentence, which is in free indirect discourse.

A few pages earlier, the narrator reports a conversation between Profitendieu and Oscar Molinier in indirect then free indirect discourse, but ends the passage, without quotation marks, by saying "Au revoir" in place of Profitendieu. The same type of thing happens in Edouard's journal. Here he is writing about his first encounter with his nephew Georges

Il sera difficile de faire admettre dans Les Faux-Monnayeurs que celui qui jouera ici mon personnage ait pu, tout en restant en bonnes relations avec sa soeur . . . (III,p.1001)

Once again there is an illicit intrusion of the shifter 'ici' instead of 'y' and the use of the verb 'ait pu' instead of 'puisse'. The effect of the tense shift and the demonstrative pose other questions, in this context, as to Edouard's relation to the story he is telling. Perhaps the most bizarre example of narrative intrusion comes in the third chapter of the second part. At the head of one of

Edouard's journal entries, one finds the inscription, "Ce même soir." It certainly isn't Edouard who writes 'ce' because his previous journal entry was from the previous day, and it is more logical to assume that it is a follow-up to the conversation that the narrator has just reported. Keypour calls this 'écriture indirecte libre.' In chapter seven of this same part, confusion reigns. The narrator says that whatever feelings of futility he may have, he is now obliged to follow the characters that he has created, among them Douviers, La Pérouse and Azais. These characters only appeared in the first part in Edouard's journal, not in the primary narration. The reader is forced to wonder, at this point, who is writing the journal, Edouard or the narrator. It may seem obvious that it is the narrator, but then why the pretense and why now unveil it only to return to the separate narrations in the third part? Another possibility is to postulate a third narrator, a master puppeteer controlling both the primary and secondary narration, that is, it is no longer the primary narrator who is saying "Je"; it is the author. This intrusion of an extra-fictive element into the narrative stream is called, in structural narratology, an exterior metalepse. Keypour describes it this way

La métalepse extérieure se produit par le mouvement inverse de celui de la 'mise en abyme'. Ici, au lieu que l'imitation vient de l'intérieur, au lieu que ce soit un personnage qui reproduit

l'image de l'auteur, c'est l'auteur qui s'immisce dans le discours des personnages.²¹

This all begs the question as to what Gide is trying to do by confusing the levels of narration. The supposed author could no more be identified as Gide than the primary narrator. What we are seeing is an infinite unveiling that only reveals another mask. "La mise en abyme se réalise sous sa forme la plus insidieuse, la plus profonde, au niveau des structures de la narration."²² The typical ploy of meta-fiction is to force the reader's awareness of the production of the text, and Gide has certainly accomplished this; however, there is more at issue than the reader's awareness of process and I shall attempt to show further function in Gide's method at the end of this chapter.

Returning to Dällenbach to discuss the reception

. . . il s'agit de montrer qu'à l'égard de son destinataire diégétique la mise en abyme de l'histoire narrée fonctionne comme véritable exemplum.²³

Dällenbach indicates three moments of reception: 1) an interpretation, 2) a new understanding and 3) a subsequent action. The novel begins after Bernard has read a letter, that we are not allowed to read, but which he summarizes. His interpretation is clear. The letter is dated just prior to his birth and is obviously from his mother's lover,

though he can not discern from the initialed signature the identity of the author. His realization of his illegitimate origins confirms a feeling he has long had and serves as a point of departure for an identity quest following a radical break with a false past. Bernard, destitute of a father, or rather of the name of a father according to his own words, will try to profit from this absence of origin to constitute himself freely as an individual. The abusive letter that he writes to his putative father is then read and commented by the father and then by the mother. The father first reacts with outrage, then with a bizarre sort of pride in the rebellious nature of his son, then with concern as to how to break the news of Bernard's departure to the rest of the family. The mother reacts first with outrage at the father, then with guilt and despair. The father and mother later separate and the father comes to the awareness that he loves his son and tries to convince him to return home.

These two opening letters set a pattern for the reception of numerous letters to follow in the novel, though not all of them provoke a new realization or subsequent action. These letters are models of reading and call for interpretation, but they remain as if hidden within the fabric of the plot in that they are read by and directly implicate their addressee, and so seem quite natural. The casual reader could easily be unaware of their exemplary nature.

Some letters have a very different effect than their authors intended. Bernard's letter to Olivier about his trip to Saas-Fée with Edouard and Laura provokes a jealous rage in Olivier and convinces him to leave for Corsica with Passavant. Lillian Griffith's letter to Passavant describing the disintegration of her love affair with Vincent provokes nothing but amused curiosity from Passavant and so little interest from Edouard that he doesn't even bother to finish it. Alexandre's letter to Armand concerning the mysterious madman who has moved in with him is only understood by the reader.

It isn't only letters that are read by the other characters. Sarah Vedel gives Edouard her father's intimate diary to read. The passage in question ostensibly concerns Pastor Vedel's difficult attempt to stop smoking, posed in moral terms of a test of his character, a test renewed daily, because he cannot seem to kick the habit. Edouard ruefully remarks that just recently Vedel had told him how easy it was to stop smoking, and he takes some satisfaction in the revelation of his pious friend's hypocrisy. However, Sarah proposes a different interpretation altogether saying, "Ou peut-être bien . . . cela prouve que 'fumer' était mis là pour autre chose." (III,p.1021) Sarah reads 'smoking' as 'masturbation,' seeing a hidden meaning behind the apparent banality. Here are two different interpretations of the same text, both of which point to Vedel's hypocrisy, but which

provoke different realizations in the two readers. One possible consequence of Sarah's reading is her disillusionment with the hypocrisy of the bourgeois moral code and her subsequent development as a libertine.

Bernard provides the most striking exemplar of reading, early in the first part while reading Edouard's journal. The radical difference here is that, at the time of his reading of Edouard's journal, Bernard is in no way directly implicated in the text he is reading. This stolen text, or rather, text paid for by the devil (III, p.996), is the beginning of the secondary narration that will become the second narrative focalisation in the rest of the novel. Bernard, bereft of father and family and searching for an identity, and who is outside of this text, will decide to actively implicate himself and so find his place within Edouard's journal.

Edouard himself tries to use his novel to influence the behavior of his nephew Georges. Pauline has told Edouard of Georges' theft and lies, and so Edouard writes a passage in his novel modeled on Georges' misbehavior. The passage is overwhelmingly didactic and, as one might imagine, Georges' reaction is just the opposite of what Edouard expected. Georges easily recognizes himself in the text, but beyond the moral prescription, he feels the affective charge. He feels valorized for having been able to inspire Edouard to write a text about him. The semantic intent escapes the

author and this is, for Gide, a sine qua non of fiction. Edouard's error was to underestimate Georges and his ability to think for himself. In his Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs, Gide specifically states

Ce n'est point en apportant la solution à certains problèmes que je puis rendre un réel service au lecteur; mais bien en le forçant à réfléchir lui-même sur des problèmes dont je n'admets guère qu'il puisse y avoir d'autre solution que particulière et personnelle. (OC VII, p.15)

Bernard occupies a special position in relation to the text. After reading Laura's letter at the end of the journal, he knows, through Olivier, that Vincent is Laura's lover and the father of her child. Laura's situation is very similar to that of Bernard's mother seventeen years earlier. Laura has deserted her dull husband for an adulterous affair of passion and is left pregnant with a bastard child. Is it mere coincidence that Bernard's mother's lover signed his letter with a 'V' as in Vincent? Bernard cites Kant's categorical imperative as his impetus to become involved, but it seems more likely that he is drawn into action by the parallelism of situations. Having interposed himself as a surrogate reader, Bernard's involvement in the text leaves a void that only the reader can fill by himself becoming actively engaged in the text. The appeal to the reader couldn't be stronger.

Gide's respect for the reader dates back to his earliest works and he never saw himself as a repository of truth. He often argued bitterly with critics whom he felt had misinterpreted his works, but he also realized that he could profit from the interpretations of others. Here is a passage at the end of Paludes, a novel written thirty years before Les Faux-Monnayeurs

Avant d'expliquer aux autres mon livre, j'attends que d'autres me l'expliquent. Vouloir expliquer d'abord c'est en restreindre le sens; car si nous savons ce que nous voulions dire, nous ne savons pas si nous ne disions que cela. --On dit toujours plus que CELA. --Et ce qui sur-tout m'y intéresse, c'est ce que j'y ai mis sans le savoir, --cette part d'inconscient, que je voudrais appeler la part de Dieu. --Un livre est toujours une collaboration, et tant plus le livre vaut-il, que plus la part du scribe y est petite, que plus l'accueil de Dieu sera grand. --Attendons de partout la révélation des choses; du public la révélation de nos oeuvres. (III,p.89)

From all evidence, Gide seems to have maintained this same opinion throughout his career and Les Faux-Monnayeurs only reenforces the importance of the reader. The only change that may have occurred in Gide's mind over the thirty years is that the excess of meaning or the subconscious meaning, the "part de Dieu" may have become the 'part du diable' in Les Faux-Monnayeurs, translating a certain pessimism concerning sincerity. Without wishing to seem enigmatic, I shall return to the ethical problems of authenticity and sincerity at the end of this chapter.

The problem of interpretation is found elsewhere in the text as evidenced by all of the misunderstandings among the characters. The scene that follows Edouard's arrival at the train station near the beginning of the novel is a remarkable example of how words and gestures can be twisted. Both Edouard and Olivier are thrilled to see one another but each is afraid to seem overly anxious and so burden the other with his presence

. . . chacun se croyant seul ému, tout occupé par sa joie propre et comme confus de la sentir si vive, n'avait souci que de ne point trop en laisser paraître l'excès. (III,p.991)

Edouard first tells Olivier that although he wasn't counting on Olivier to meet him at the station, he was certain that he would come and affectionately grasps his arm. Olivier downplays his own presence at the station to meet Edouard by saying that he had an errand to run in the vicinity. He then blushes at his own lie just as Edouard grasps his arm, making Edouard think that Olivier had found his remark presumptuous and that Olivier is blushing because of his excessively effusive gesture. Each is afraid of being harshly judged by the other and neither can think of anything to say. The discourse of the other systematically confirms the doubts of each of the two interlocutors in a particularly painful lesson in interpretation. Each phrase

seems to fall into a void confirming what is obvious to each of them, that the other is bored.

Chacun d'eux se dépitait à ne sortir de soi rien que de sec, de contraint; et chacun d'eux, sentant la gêne et l'agacement de l'autre, s'en croyait l'objet et la cause. De tels entretiens ne peuvent donner rien de bon, si rien ne vient à la rescousse. Rien ne vint. (III, p.993)

Olivier and Edouard are in love with one another, and it is this very love that prevents them from communicating, afraid as they are of some indiscretion that will scare the other away. Gide seems to anticipate Lacan's perception that, "L'émetteur reçoit du récepteur son propre message sous une forme inversée."²⁴

The conversation between Olivier and Bernard following the latter's baccalaureate exam provides another example of miscommunication. Bernard asks his friend what he thinks of the La Fontaine poem that he had analysed on the exam. Olivier gives a very flippant and cynical answer, obviously influenced by his frequentation of Passavant. Bernard recognizes the influence of Passavant and aggressively attacks Olivier by telling him that such ideas poison France. Olivier doesn't understand Bernard's pompous aggression and, in the lunch conversation that follows, Bernard, so consumed with countering the pernicious effects of Passavant, fails to recognize Olivier's despair. Both characters have hidden agenda that prevent communication.

There are numerous other examples of conflict of interpretation and faulty communication, both unintentional and deliberate. Strouvilhou and Pastor Vedel argue over the meaning of the parable of the sterile fig tree. Sophroniska and Edouard argue over the meaning of Boris' behavior. Strouvilhou and Passavant argue over the meaning of literature. Passavant misleads Vincent about the reason for his desire to see Olivier and he later attempts to mislead Edouard about his feelings toward Olivier. Passavant also tries to condition Olivier's reading of his novel by placing an ambiguous dedicatory note at the beginning. The narrator is also guilty of this same tactic as he places misleading quotes at the beginning of a number of chapters. Passavant tries to mislead his readers by having weak criticism of his novel published so that he may 'courageously' respond; and he attempts to mislead the readers of his literary magazine ghost authoring a preface favorable to his ideas without acknowledging his connection to the magazine. Pastor Vedel avoids any real communication with people by using empty, pious phrases and pretending to be busy with his parishioners. To return to the reader, the narrator misleads him on several counts. He pretends not to know the intentions of his characters and to absolve himself for any responsibility for their acts.

In a larger sense of reading, one can see, through all of these examples of reading and interpretation throughout

the text, the creation of a context of doubt or suspicion as to the reliability of language to accurately transmit messages. Gide is conditioning his readers to the terms of his text by laying bare the central problems of creating a text. Karl Marx said

L'objet d'art--de même que tout autre produit--crée un public réceptif à l'art et capable de jouir de la beauté. La production ne produit pas seulement un objet pour le sujet, mais aussi un sujet pour l'objet.²⁵

The reader of Les Faux-Monnayeurs is called upon to constitute himself as an active subject, to assume his role in the process of meaning. The narration with a multiple perspective places the reader squarely in the alterity of being. What is the true meaning of the words he is reading? It is for him to choose or to propose other possibilities. But the presence of so many readers and writers within this particular novel also place the reader of Les Faux-Monnayeurs at the heart of the productive process. The implicit author or producer and the implicit reader or receptor, both clearly inscribed in the narration, represent the relationship between the real author and reader. The cover of the book becomes permeable and the reader, no longer a passive outsider, is drawn into the text. The reader is drawn not to the psychological aspects of the narration in a movement of identification with the

character, but because the character is very obviously a reader, the reader is drawn into the process of the narration and the relationship it implies. Paradoxically, this mise en abyme both draws the reader into the text and establishes a distance between the reader and the text--the distance of irony.

The author and the reader are like two people sitting on opposite sides of a smoked-glass window. Depending on the focus of their vision and the incidence of light, they may see a reflection of themselves or the image of the other piercing through their own. One may think of Gide's metaphor of the lantern and the parabola that he used to explain to Roger Martin du Gard the difference between their separate narrative approaches. As the lantern passes from one side of this translucent surface of the mise en abyme to the other, the refracted light yields a different perspective.

The Mise en Abyme of the Code

There remains a series of questions concerning the text. Where and who is the person narrating? To whom is the text being narrated, and over what distance? This type of question brings us to the mise en abyme of the code. After examining individual statements and the process of stating, the question now is how the text is spoken or narrated. Once again, Dällenbach gives us the definition

A l'instar de cette réalité à deux faces qu'est le signe linguistique, l'énoncé peut être appréhendé ou dans sa référence à autre chose, ou saisi en lui-même. Aussi donne-t-il lieu par constitution à deux mises en abyme distinctes: l'une fictionnelle, dédoublant le récit dans sa dimension référentielle d'histoire racontée, l'autre, textuelle, le réfléchissant sous son aspect littérale d'organisation signifiante.²⁶

Code, in the sense that Dällenbach uses it, isn't the same as the code that most linguists use to refer to a system of signs common to a given group, that is, a language. Code, in the Jakobsonian sense refers rather to the possibility that a story has to define its signs through its own signs and to speak of its own mode of operation. These textual mises en abyme are often symbolized by three thematic fields: physiology (particularly anatomy), art and technology.

The reference to J.S.Bach's Art of the Fugue during the literary discussion at Saas-Fée functions in this manner, telling the reader that Edouard would like to play with all the possibilities that a novelist has at his disposal to compose his own novel. Sophroniska is skeptical and tells Edouard that music, unlike the novel, is a mathematical art, but that if it accords too much importance to number, it loses its pathos and humanity. Bach, she concludes, created a master work of boredom, accessible only to a few experts. Edouard, however, finds Bach's work to be an admirable temple and the pinnacle of Bach's art. (III,p.1084) This may

certainly be seen as a reference to Les Faux-Monnayeurs which, as the previous discussion has shown, attempts on the one hand to purify the novel of extraneous elements, and on the other to use all the possibilities the form offers.

The whole discussion at Saas-Fée of the novel in general and about Edouard's novel in particular are so many indications of the manner in which the text we are reading is organized. For instance, Sophroniska reproaches novelists for using hackneyed psychological profiles in the composition of their characters, ". . . ils n'ont ni fondation, ni sous-sol. . . tout ce qui n'est créé que par la seule intelligence est faux." (III,p.1075) Edouard understands her critique but finds her point of view too limited

. . . certaines raisons d'art, certaines raisons supérieures, lui échappent qui me font penser que ce n'est pas d'un bon naturaliste qu'on peut faire un bon romancier. (III,p.1076)

Edouard is again pointing to the specificity of the novel as an art form. Though it may touch upon a broad variety of subjects while following its characters, the primary allegiance of the novel is to itself as an art form. In a journal entry from the previous year, Edouard had already decided against the use of psychological analysis in his novels. It is rather the power of imagination that dominates one's perception of self and others

L'analyse psychologique a perdu pour moi tout intérêt du jour où je me suis avisé que l'homme éprouve ce qu'il imagine éprouver. . . . Dans le domaine des sentiments, le réel ne se distingue pas de l'imaginaire. (III,p.988)

Gide's assertion early in his career seems an even more valid statement about his own work at the time of the composition of Les Faux-Monnayeurs

Rhétorique. En étudiant la question de la raison d'être de l'oeuvre d'art, on arrive à trouver que cette raison suffisante, ce symbole de l'oeuvre, c'est sa composition. (OC II,p.424)

Edouard considers the novel to be a basically lawless genre, but novelists have been afraid to experience the true freedom it offers and have chosen to remain slaves to the idea of resemblance

Il n'a jamais connu, le roman, cette "formidable érosion des contours", dont parle Nietzsche, et ce volontaire éclatement de la vie . . . (III,p.1080)

Edouard finds the classical theater of the Greeks or that of the 17th century in France to be the most perfect works of art and, at the same time, the most profoundly human

. . . cela n'est humain que profondément; cela ne se pique pas de le paraître, ou du moins de

paraître réel. Cela demeure une oeuvre d'art.
(III,p.1080)

He goes on to criticize Balzac and Stendhal for having wanted to compete with the public registry in clarity. Edouard has no such pretensions and declares that his work competes with nothing because it resembles nothing else. He finally states one of his general principles as a novelist

En localisant et en spécifiant, l'on restreint. Il n'y a de vérité psychologique que particulière, il est vrai; mais il n'y a d'art que général. Tout le problème est là, précisément; exprimer le général par le particulier; faire exprimer par le particulier le général. (III,p.1081)

It is obvious that the author of Les Faux-Monnayeurs wants the reader to examine his work according to the criteria that Edouard has just announced. This isn't to say that Edouard and the author are one and the same or that Edouard is expressing Gide's opinions, though that may be so in this case; rather, Gide has let Edouard define the context of the reading; he has chosen the terrain on which the reader and author shall meet. However, it is also true that Edouard has problems and eventually fails in transposing his theory into practice.

There is another element of the structure of the novel that is reflected in the composition; there are several series of framing sequences throughout the novel that serve

to illustrate the narrative framing in the composition of the novel. The most striking examples are found at the beginning of the novel, in order to orient the reader. Bernard puts the letter from his true father back in the envelope, then puts the envelope in the pack of letters, then puts the pack back in the box, then puts the box back in the drawer inside of the bureau which he then recovers with the slats of wood, then with the onyx plaque top. Buried inside of these successive layers is the text that is the origin of Bernard's quest for identity.

While in the train from the coast toward Paris, Edouard finishes re-reading Laura's letter of distress. He puts the letter back in the envelope, places the envelope in his journal, places the journal in between his shirts, inside his suitcase that he will put in the storage area of the train station upon his arrival. This text, Laura's letter, takes its place in Edouard's journal at the end of a series of entries concerning the decrystallization of Edouard's love for Laura the previous year and her subsequent marriage to Félix Douviers. The letter stands in stark contrast to the self-serving opinions that Edouard had expressed at the time, and is the impetus for his return to Paris and his involvement in the plot. Bernard reverses the whole sequence by removing Edouard's suitcase from the baggage claim and taking it to a hotel room where he eventually makes his way through the various layers back to Laura's letter. It is her

letter that decides his next step in his quest for a new life.

Bernard's reading of the journal has already been indicated above as a model for reading in the text, but this scene also illustrates a series of frames. Bernard reads Edouard's journal in which there is the story of Laura's marriage, during which Edouard reports a conversation with Laura in which she reminds him of a dinner ten years earlier at the Pension Vedel during which Strouvilhou had infuriated Pastor Vedel by mocking the parable of the barren fig tree in the Bible, which, by the way, is a story told by Jesus and reported by Paul. During the same marriage party we read of Pastor Vedel's struggle to overcome a bad habit as recorded in his diary and which Sarah and Edouard both interpret, as recorded in Edouard's journal that Bernard is reading after having removed it from the suitcase, etc. These are but some of the most striking examples. If one considers this framing technique as a necessary condition for the mise en abyme, Les Faux-Monnayeurs gives the impression of ad infinitum framing, like a warehouse full of Ukrainian dolls. Framing on the level of the organisation of the text, as illustrated above, could be considered as a mise en abyme of the mise en abyme procedure itself, and so it allegorizes the composition of the novel.

In summation of the types of mise en abyme, there are three possibilities of reflection within the narration: 1)

simple reduplication, that is, a fragment that shows a similarity with the work that includes it, 2) infinite reduplication; a fragment that maintains a relation of similitude with the work that contains it while, at the same time, containing another fragment that resembles it and 3) aporistic or paradoxical reduplication, that is, a fragment that supposedly contains the work in which it is contained. A *mise en abyme* is metaphoric if there is a relation of similitude between the whole of the story and some of its parts; or it may arise metonymically from the relationships among the agents implied by the production of the story either by the effect of a reversal or through psychological retroaction. A literary work may contain several *mises en abyme*, either as a conglomerate, that is to say, ramified like a star figure; or superimposed and overdetermined as an agglomerate, with either a single dominant or all of them of equal value. Finally, from a purely economic point of view, the importance of a *mise en abyme* is measured by its narrative yield. The more the *mise en abyme* is perceptible, the greater the yield.²⁷ Edouard's journal provides the highest yield *mise en abyme* in the text. It is a *mise en abyme* of the 'énoncé' as the narration of a writer composing a novel by the same name as the one that contains it. It is a *mise en abyme* of the 'énonciation' as a sporadic discussion of the problems of narration and the relationship between narrator and reader. Finally, it is a *mise en abyme*

of the code as it reflects back on the manner in which the novel we are reading should be interpreted.

Dällenbach mentions two other possible categories of *mise en abyme* besides the three primary categories--*énoncé*, *énonciation* and *code*--mentioned above.²⁸ There is a meta-textual *mise en abyme* when there is a homology between the referent statement and the code. The referent statement could be an esthetic debate, like the one between Edouard and his friends at Saas-Fée. It could be a manifesto, a credo or an 'art poétique,' all three of which could be used to characterize Strouvilhou's speech to Passavant concerning literary value. Edouard's journal offers numerous examples of his esthetic ideas concerning the composition of a novel, which reflect directly on the novel we are reading. A meta-textual *mise en abyme* could also be an indication as to the finality that the author assigns to his work. This is a difficult category to handle in the context of Gide's work that refuses to conclude, leaving conclusions to the reader. Perhaps Bernard's notebook in which he inscribes opinions that he hears or reads in one column while waiting to hear or read the opposite opinion so that he can inscribe it in the facing column in an attempt to avoid all dogmatism, searching for a synthesis of the two antithetical points of view. Auguste Anglès sees this type of mimetic behavior as a primary characteristic of Gide's thought, his inability to understand without feeling something himself

C'est la clef de sa double et constante démarche:
éprouver par mimétisme, pour connaître par le
dedans une autre forme d'esprit et s'enrichir à sa
fréquentation . . .²⁹

This calls to mind another mise en abyme that, within this context, could be considered meta-textual: La Pérouse's perfect chord in which all dissonance is resolved. In an essay at the turn of the century Gide had spoken of this same perfect chord

C'est dans le sentiment d'un accord, non d'une rivalité qu'est le bonheur, et quand bien même toutes les forces de la nature l'une contre toutes autres, chacune lutterait, il m'est impossible de ne pas concevoir une unité supérieure présidant à cette lutte même, initiale de toute division, où chaque âme peut se réfugier pour son bien être. (OC II, p.416)

I shall not overwhelm the reader with a long list of meta-textual mises en abyme, especially since many have already been mentioned in the context of the discussion of the three primary categories of mise en abyme. The whole problem of categories arises from a close reading of Les Faux-Monnayeurs because, being at the same time the novel in the novel, the novel about the novel and the novel of the novelist, the reflections jump from level to level like so many electrons around the nucleus of a plutonium atom. Dällenbach is aware of this rather unique situation in Les

Faux-Monnayeurs and briefly discusses Gide's tendency to play with the topology of his text

Hésitation prolongée entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur, il nous introduit dans un espace courbe où cercles excentriques et concentriques se recoupent et où l'on retrouve le miroir des peintres avec ce qu'il a pouvoir de symboliser: l'intégration de l'autre dans le même, l'oscillation du dedans et du dehors.³⁰

Finally, there is the transcendental mise en abyme, that Dällenbach defines as a statement that serves as an origin and organizing principle for the text. It is both the cause and effect of the text that is given birth by it and gives birth to it. It brings up a historico-philosophical problem in that the metaphor of origin and the text,

. . . dépendent tous deux, ultimement, de la manière dont telle oeuvre, à tel moment, pense son rapport à la vérité et se comporte au regard de la mimésis.³¹

Although Dällenbach doesn't mention it, it should nevertheless be obvious that the moment of which he speaks must also include the moment of the reading of the text inasmuch as a text acquires an existence independent of its author and, over time, the situation of the reader and his horizon of expectations will change. Gide always claimed to be writing for future generations, as does Edouard in Les Faux-Monnayeurs.

There are three choices for metaphors that serve as transcendental mises en abyme in Les Faux-Monnayeurs: the counterfeit gold coin, the talisman and the devil. One might consider these as an agglomerate transcendental mise en abyme. All three of them directly reflect the problem of reality versus illusion, that is to say, the problem of mimesis. The gold coin poses the question of authenticity, the talisman points to the power of the imagination and the devil, the problem of language and sincerity. Dällenbach is correct to indicate mimesis as the crux of the problem. The defamiliarization that the mise en abyme creates in the reader accustomed to the psychological realism of the nineteenth century serves to attract his attention toward formal elements that had become unconscious by their very excessive familiarity. Just as the psychological realism, through a dialectical movement, had gone beyond the individual consciousness of self in Romanticism, Gide's novel (like those of Wolff, Joyce and Svevo, among others) in turn creates a new synthesis by incorporating the process of narration as well as the product of it.³²

We have seen a multiplicity of mises en abyme at all levels of the narration in Les Faux-Monnayeurs. The structuralists served well for the elucidation of the elements of this narrative strategy, but they are limited to descriptive analysis. As Gide once said, "La synthèse doit se précéder d'analyse; et l'analyse, besoin de l'esprit,

naît du sentiment de la complexité." (OC II, p.417) It is clear that Les Faux-Monnayeurs is a complex text. In the final chapter that follows we shall attempt a provisory synthesis of the disparate elements of this text by getting back to some of Gide's key concerns, evoked in the discussion above of the transcendental mise en abyme. The reflection of the mise en abyme suggests the problem of the alterity of being, the problem of becoming. These abstract notions find their concrete counterparts in Gide's constant thematic concerns--authenticity, sincerity and imagination. Gide's obsession to tell the truth about himself, about others and about the world, reaches its apotheosis in Les Faux-Monnayeurs. Is it possible to be authentic or sincere? In an absolute sense, one might as well ask if it is possible to stop the flow of time. The devil is always there, undermining our existence. The devil, for Gide, is self-delusion and the perfect hypocrite is the person who lies in all sincerity.

NOTES

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15. Dällenbach, p.96.
16. Gerald Prince, "Lecteurs et lectures dans les Faux-Monnayeurs," Neophilologus, number 62, 1973. "Personnages romanciers dans les Faux-Monnayeurs," French Studies, number 25, 1971.
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18. Ibid., p.110.
19. Ibid., p.216.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
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26. Dällenbach, p.123.
27. Ibid., p.140.
28. Ibid., p.132.
29. Anglès, p.24.
30. Dällenbach, p.44.
31. Ibid., p.131.
32. Hutcheon, p.100.

CHAPTER 6

TIME AND HISTORY IN LES FAUX-MONNAYEURS

The advantages as well as the dangers of a structuralist approach to the novel are apparent in Dällenbach's exceptional work. The reduction of a novel so complex as Les Faux-Monnayeurs to a series of conceptual categories based on Roman Jakobson's linguistic research reveals much about Gide's narrative technique and discursive strategies while at the same time obscuring certain essential elements of Gide's project.

David Keypour's narratological approach, borrowing Gérard Genette's categories, is also enlightening, but it would lead the reader to the rather fanciful notion that Edouard is actually the author of Les Faux-Monnayeurs. This perspective points to one of the inherent problems with a structuralist approach that focuses attention exclusively on questions of form which, in this case, leads to a paradoxical solution and only confuses the issues. Genette is certainly aware of the dangers and cautions the reader against snap judgements

Une situation narrative, comme toute autre,
est un ensemble complexe dans lequel l'analyse, ou

simplement la description, ne peut distinguer qu'en déchirant un tissu de relations étroites entre l'acte narratif, ses protagonistes, ses déterminations spatio-temporelles, son rapport aux autres situations narratives impliquées dans le même récit, etc. Les nécessités de l'exposition nous contraignent à cette violence inévitable du seul fait que le discours critique, non plus qu'un autre, ne saurait tout dire à la fois.¹

This chapter is an attempt to discuss some of the more complex problems that Dällenbach and Keypour, true to their methodological concerns, put aside--specifically, temporal relationships and irony. The structuralist critique is basically descriptive and is concerned with the differentiation of functions and categories. In so doing it not only separates the text from real time or what may be called "historical" time, but it also tends to reduce time relationships within the text. The structuralist spatializes time by placing it in objective categories, but does not re-integrate time as a crucial determination that, in fact, undermines the fixed nature of the very categories he has established.

One by-product of this method is a complete obfuscation of the relationship between the text and the world, particularly as concerns any ethical content. Dällenbach and Keypour, among others, have taken Gide's plea for an esthetic appraisal of his work as a justification for their method. As I have shown in an earlier chapter, although Gide indeed gave primacy to esthetics, he by no means denied the ethical content or intent of his works. He was arguing

against a didactic approach, but was certainly aware, as I shall show in this chapter, of the broader ethical implications of his esthetics. Gide's contemporary, George Lukacs, provides a good starting point

Dans le roman . . . l'intention éthique est sensible au coeur même de la structuration de chaque détail, elle est, dans son contenu le plus secret, un élément efficace de la construction de l'oeuvre. Ainsi, alors que la caractéristique essentielle des autres genres littéraires est de reposer dans une forme achevée, le roman apparaît comme quelque chose qui devient, comme un processus.²

In order to discuss irony in Les Faux-Monnayeurs it will be necessary to re-integrate the notion of time. In his famous Théorie du roman, Lukacs says, ". . . toute action du roman n'est qu'un combat contre les puissances du temps."³ I would like to show the importance of temporal elements in the novel for a deeper understanding of Gide's irony. It is time to put the pieces back together again and search for a discursive logic to this disquieting novel of multiple ironies and time is the missing element.

Problems of Chronology

There are several different ways of considering time in the novel. Just as the novel creates a fictional space, it also creates a time of its own, outside of real time. This

is the power of discourse which, in Foucault's words, ". . . a le pouvoir de retenir la flèche, déjà lancée, en un retrait du temps qui est son espace propre."⁴ The narrator organizes time and either stretches it or compresses it according to an internal logic of exposition. He may recount events in their normal chronological sequence, recount a series of events one after the other, but that take place simultaneously, or recount events in a reverse order through flashbacks. The narrator may spend many pages telling about events that occurred in a brief period of time or, to the contrary, summarize in a few lines events that occurred over an extended period of time. Gide uses all of the different possibilities to varying degrees in Les Faux-Monnayeurs.

Part I of the novel covers slightly more than a day. It begins on a hot afternoon in July and ends late in the evening of the following day. The primary mode of presentation is simultaneity, as the narrator moves throughout Paris from one group of characters to another. The first part also contains Edouard's journal, a second narration, that takes the events back eight and a half months to October 16 of the previous year. Edouard's journal entries, as a second narration, cover approximately one month until he leaves Paris for England on November 13. Within Edouard's journal there are brief flashbacks to events that took place as much as ten years earlier, when he

and Laura were both working at the Pension Vedel and Strouvilhou was a student there.

Part II takes place over an indefinite period of time between early July and mid-September. It begins with Bernard's letter to Olivier in which Bernard summarizes the departure from Paris and the trip to Saas-Fée. He says that they have been there for six days. The second chapter is an entry from Edouard's journal and seems to predate Bernard's letter since Edouard says that he easily located Boris and his guardian Sophroniska soon after his arrival and his conversation with Sophroniska during a morning is the subject of that journal entry. The third chapter is an evening conversation among the protagonists told by the narrator and is at an indeterminate time. The next two chapters, told by the narrator and by Edouard, recount two conversations, one between Bernard and Laura and the other between Edouard and Sophroniska, could be taking place simultaneously, but there is no indication nor do they offer any further details concerning how long they have been in Saas-Fée. The sixth chapter is a letter from Olivier to Bernard from Corsica that recounts the events in Olivier's life since receiving Bernard's letter. Finally, the seventh and last chapter of Part II is completely outside the temporal framework of the rest of novel. It is the narrator speaking directly to the reader about the events and characters of the novel.

Part III begins on September 22 and ends in November, a month and a half later. It is told alternately by the narrator and Edouard. Each chapter usually centers on a particular conversation between characters. The primary narrator follows the actions of the young characters and Edouard reports on his conversations with the older characters. Edouard's journal is a time reference as most of his journal entries at the beginning of Part III are dated. The events narrated happen sequentially with few exceptions. Both the primary narrator and Edouard often situate their respective narratives through the use of time shifters either in their own voice or through one of the characters.

The odd thing about the time references in this novel is that they are often contradictory. The discrepancies are well hidden within the text, but there are so many glaring mistakes of time reference that it is difficult to assume a momentary lapse of attention on the part of the author.

For instance, the novel begins on a Wednesday, a hot day, three weeks before the baccalaureate exam, so possibly in late June or early July. However, the following day Olivier says that the same baccalaureate exam is in ten days. Wednesday is easy to surmise since Olivier tells Bernard that he heard his brother Vincent speaking with Laura ". . . avant-hier, lundi soir . . ." (III,p.955) Later Bernard asks Olivier what he is doing the following day, Thursday. Olivier is going to the train station the next day

to meet his uncle Edouard whom he has not seen for six months. Bernard follows them, steals Edouard's suitcase, finds Laura, meets Edouard and makes an appointment to meet with Edouard and Laura the following day, Friday, to leave for Saas-Fée. After meeting Bernard on Thursday, Edouard visits La Pérouse who says, in a thinly veiled allusion, that he will commit suicide in three months. (III,p.1062) In a conversation with Passavant, Lady Griffith says that Laura left her husband, Félix, after three month of marriage to come to Pau where she met Vincent. (III,p.970)

Problems arise however when Edouard reads Laura's letter calling him back to Paris. (III,p.984-985) She tells Edouard that it has been more than three months since she last saw him at Victoria Station just before her departure for the south of France. She dates that meeting on April 2. She has written the letter on Monday, two days before the narration begins, so it should be at least July 4. According to Edouard's journal, Laura was married on November 5 (III,p.1007) of the previous year, meaning that it was five months before she left Félix, not three. Also according to Edouard's journal, he left Paris for England on November 13 (III,p.1031), meaning that almost eight months have elapsed since he last saw Olivier, not six. On November 1 Edouard reports that Pauline Molinier has told him that Vincent ". . . achève de se guérir." (III,p.1004) Does this mean that

Vincent continues to finish getting well at the sanatorium in Pau for five months?

In the second part the discrepancies are even more confusing. Bernard writes Olivier on a Monday saying that they have been in Saas-Fée for six days, meaning that they arrived the previous Tuesday or Wednesday. Since they presumably left on a Friday, does that mean that it took them four or five days to reach Saas-Fée? That is possible, but Edouard notices the name of Victor Strouvilhou on the hotel register and is told by the manager that Strouvilhou left the hotel two days before their arrival. (III,p.1088) Near the end of the first part, as Olivier is leaving Passavant's office on Thursday afternoon, a visitor is announced and he notices the name on the card, Victor Strouvilhou. (III,p.1044) That would mean that Edouard and company arrived in Saas-Fée on Saturday, not in the middle of the next week. Bernard presents Edouard with a counterfeit gold coin that he bought from a shopkeeper who said someone had paid him with it several days earlier. (III,p.1086) The reader knows the counterfeiter to be Strouvilhou, but it was at least eight days earlier that he left Saas-Fée.

The third part begins with a reassuring journal entry dated September 22. But in the third chapter, another of Edouard's journal entries dated September 29, Edouard visits La Pérouse and finds him in a foul mood. On September 22, a

Wednesday, La Pérouse received a visit from his grandson, Boris. He says that day, September 22, was three months exactly since he had told Edouard that he was going to commit suicide. That would mean that their conversation took place on June 23, not after July 4 as Laura's previously mentioned letter would indicate. Edouard promises to take La Pérouse over to the school for the opening day, in two days, therefore on October 1. But the previous day in a discussion with Azais, Edouard is told that classes resume in two days, that is, September 30. The evening following opening day, Bernard tells Edouard that he has his exam in two days, either October 2 or 3. Olivier comes to see Bernard on the day of his exam and the narrator says that he returned the previous day. The narrator then refers back to Olivier's meeting with Edouard at the train station two months earlier, which would make the Thursday of their meeting August 1 or 2. Furthermore, if September 22 is a Wednesday then September 29 is also a Wednesday. That means that opening day is Thursday or Friday. On the evening of opening day Bernard tells Edouard that he has his exams in two days, Saturday or Sunday. Saturday would make more sense certainly and the day of the exam Olivier invites Bernard to the 'Soirée des Argonautes'. After the party he writes to his brother Georges asking him to retrieve his things from Passavant's place the next day, Sunday. There seems to be a concordance here if one follows the Azais chronology placing

opening day on Thursday, September 30 and Bernard's exam and the party on Saturday, October 2. However, on Saturday Olivier goes looking for Edouard who isn't home, but the narrator says he is visiting Pauline. The following chapter is an undated entry in Edouard's journal, but from the previous chapter one may conclude that it is Saturday. Edouard says that he had lunch with Oscar Molinier two days earlier, that is Thursday, September 30, but the journal entry of that day was September 27.

The reader has a right to ask the meaning of all of these time discrepancies. Are they simply careless errors by an author known for his scrupulous attention to detail? But if it is intentional, then what is the point? The errors do not seem to belong to either of the two narrators exclusively and they are not limited to any character or group of characters. Edouard is the primary source of time reference in the novel. His journal provides the reader with dates as points of reference for the action. Unfortunately he isn't always so circumspect in dating his entries and so violates one of the basic rules of journal writing, ignoring the calendar. Blanchot says of the journal writer, ". . . il doit respecter le calendrier. C'est le pacte qu'il signe. Le calendrier est son démon, l'inspireur, le compositeur, le provocateur et le gardien."⁵ Edouard, by ignoring this dictum, by not respecting time, has undermined the narrative and abandoned the reader.

Perhaps an explanation must be sought within the deep structure of the novel as a problem of the function of time in the narrative. Alain Goulet tries to justify the time discrepancies through a theory of the subjective relationship that the characters have to events. He claims that, ". . . chaque fois que surgit une divergence dans la chronologie, le point de vue qui peut être considéré comme erroné est révélateur d'une passion."⁶

This theory works for the specific errors that he cites such as Olivier advancing the date of the baccalaureate exam or Edouard's precipitous presentation of Laura's marriage or Lady Griffith's underestimation of the time Laura had spent with her husband before leaving for Pau. The subjective conflict of chronology is more difficult to justify in the case of the beginning date of the novel. If Goulet accepts early July as the most logical date based on Laura's letter to Edouard, then how does he justify La Pérouse's declaration on September 22 that he had spoken to Edouard exactly three months earlier. Following Goulet's logic that Olivier moved up the date of his exam so as to be able to spend more time with his uncle, how does he justify Olivier's underestimation of Edouard's absence when it would seem more logical that he exaggerate it? Although Goulet says that there is nothing in the second part that would permit it to be dated, it is clear that Bernard's letter mentioning a day and a quantity of time does permit one to

establish a chronology in relation to the first part, as does Strouvilhou's departure date, even if the two are in contradiction. Goulet's psychological explanation for the time discrepancies does not follow. His general statement concerning the floating or contradictory chronology is nevertheless valid. He writes that the narrator,

. . . a voulu brouiller toute recherche d'ordre référentiel, et surtout que flottements et contradictions résultent du nouveau "réalisme" qu'il recherche. . . . le narrateur s'efface en tant que meneur de jeu pour laisser la place à une multitude de points de vue partiels et limités de personnages assumant tour à tour la fonction de narrateur, dont la parole et la mémoire sont toujours sujet à caution, qui déforment ou déplacent les faits, et qui, par leurs indications, témoignent de la relativité de leurs connaissances.⁷

Goulet is correct in his assertion as far as it goes, but he nevertheless begs the question as to the object of this new realism. Roman Jakobson speaks of realism as a code which he calls an ideogram. He writes

The ideogram needs to be deformed. The artist innovator must impose a new form upon our perception if we are to detect in a given thing those traits which went unnoticed the day before.⁸

The term 'realism' implies a mimetic relationship between the stylized narration and the experience of the reader in the exterior world. Linda Hutcheon claims that

Le 'réalisme psychologique' du début du XXe siècle, que la conscience auto-centrique des romantiques avait rendu possible, a élargi, encore une fois à travers une sorte de mouvement dialectique, le sens de la mimésis romanesque au point d'y inclure aussi bien le processus que le produit.⁹

Gide is able to accomplish this in a most striking manner through the character Edouard who is paradoxically writing a novel of the same title and including many of the same events as the novel the reader is reading. He is therefore placed in an ambiguous position and forced to question the validity of the text he is reading. Michel Zeraffa astutely remarks

Pour révéler toutefois la symbiose du concret et de l'interprété, du spontané et de l'artifice, du direct et de l'indirect, il fallait recourir d'un mode de médiation qui participât tout ensemble de l'écrivain et de ses personnages, du vécu et du regard critique sur celui-ci. La présence "filtrante" du romancier Edouard dans le roman résoudra le faux dilemme: art ou réalisme, et permettra à Gide de fonder son récit sur le caractère essentiellement indéterminé de l'existence, sur la précarité, la variabilité des rapports humains et des consciences.¹⁰

This is the power of language, to absorb the objective reality of history and transform it into a subjective reality. The object of this new realism is no longer to lull the reader into a false sense of identification with the characters and the situation, relating to the narrative as

he would to memoirs or to a history book. The new realist wants to make the reader aware of the artifice through a process of defamiliarization.

La dénudation des procédés littéraires dans la métafiction dirige l'attention du lecteur sur les éléments formels dont, par excès de familiarisation, il est devenu inconscient. Par la prise de conscience du matériau qui sert désormais de toile de fond, de nouveaux appels à prêter attention et à participer activement influencent l'acte de lecture.¹¹

Subjective versus Objective Time

The internal and external anachronism of Les Faux-Monnayeurs points to the difference between objective time and subjective time. Typically, in realist novels, the narrator properly represents objective time through the 'récit', carefully arranging the sequence of events so that, even with flashbacks, a linear development in time may be re-established. The characters themselves are permitted to be mistaken or even to deliberately falsify the sequence of events. But the narrator in Les Faux-Monnayeurs is unreliable to the point that he cannot be trusted to properly place the events in time. This is but another means by which the 'récit' dissolves into the 'discours', blurring distinctions between the primary narrator and Edouard, and by extension with the other characters in the novel. Gide in effect unveils the illusion of reality that the novelist

would create and implicitly attacks the notion of objective time in the dynamic movement of history. Ironically, clocks appear constantly in the narration, but it is the idea alone that inhabits objective time. Lukacs stated

La plus grande discordance entre l'idée et la réalité est le temps, le déroulement du temps comme durée. . . . Et c'est pourquoi le roman, qui est la seule forme correspondant à l'errance transcendante de l'idée, est aussi la seule forme qui, parmi ses principes constitutifs, fasse place au temps réel, à la durée bergsonienne.¹²

Wolfgang Holdheim treats this problem directly in an interesting analysis of Les Faux-Monnayeurs as a vitalistic novel. It represents an evolving present that is both open to the past, as the action depends on anterior relations among the characters, and open to the future, as so many of the separate destinies of the characters remain unresolved at the end. This openness to the past, rather than loosening up the narrative system, make things more complicated and tend to disorient the reader. All of the narrative threads left hanging at the end seem very contrived. But Holdheim sees Gide's play here of structure and time as an ingenious artifice that allows the author to represent the process of becoming.¹³ Although Gide seems to be engaged in the creative structuralization of chaos, always incomplete, Holdheim claims that he is actually doing just the reverse because

His point of departure is form, not chaos--spatial concentration and not temporal dispersion. . . . Instead of an active structurization of chaos we have a mimetic "chaotization" of structure; instead of an irremediably incomplete formalization there is a finished system that strives to create the impression of temporal incompleteness. This would-be decentralization is itself purely formal. The flux of time has been . . . reduced to its external structure. . . . What Gide's novel presents is the abstract pattern, the architecture of duration.¹⁴

Holdheim sees a progression, in Gide's stories, toward a gradual loosening of the structure. But it is with Les Faux-Monnayeurs that the author is finally able to construct a mobile structure.

Dynamism becomes inherent in the structure qua structure, the system as such begins to move. The weakening of form has become a specifically formal enterprise, a systematic "ironization" which poses as an image of time.¹⁵

The mode of presentation in the first part of Les Faux-Monnayeurs is simultaneity. The events of the novel begin after Bernard has reset the clock on his mother's bureau. The narrator skips around Paris visiting the different characters, often going back a few hours to report what was happening somewhere else at the same time. Even the passages from Edouard's journal that are situated eight months earlier seem to press events together illogically and the confusion about the lapse of time between the last entry and

Edouard's return to France seems to reinforce the simultaneity. But most of all, as the journal passages are inserted within the present narrative and read by Bernard who uses them to his own advantage in the present to, as it were, insert himself into Edouard's narrative, they are more relevant to the present narration. If the mode here is simultaneity, the perspective is nevertheless oriented toward the past. Bernard is escaping from his family after discovering the truth about his origins. Vincent is escaping from his responsibility to Laura. Laura is escaping from her marriage to Félix. Edouard is trying to find the passion he had with Laura in Olivier. La Pérouse is trying to establish a relationship with his dead son through his grandson.

In the second part, although the events seem to be reported sequentially, there are no clear indications as to the lapse of time between the chapters. The confusion about the lapse of time between the departure from Paris and the arrival in Saas-Fée serves to reenforce the feeling of timelessness in the second part. The action in chapters two through five is bracketed by the two retrospective letters of Bernard and Olivier in chapters one and six. It is as if time stood still and the characters were living in a continuous present while the freudian Sophroniska takes apart the mechanism of Boris' mind, cleans it and puts it back together again like jeweler repairing a clock. This last metaphor is coined by Edouard as he speaks with

Sophroniska in Chapter 5. The last chapter of Part II is outside of time. The narrator speaks to the reader directly as within parentheses and introduces the action of the third part.

The third part then is sequential in its presentation bringing all of the characters of the first part back together again and untying the relationships that developed in the first part. Lady Griffith dies, murdered by Vincent. Olivier tries to commit suicide. La Pérouse tries to commit suicide and ends up haunted by the sound of a clock ticking in the wall over his bed. Laura returns to her husband. Bernard returns to his father. Bronja dies and Boris, as the pre-appointed time arrives on the clock of the study hall, commits suicide with the very pistol that his grandfather had prepared for his own suicide. But these various subplots remain essentially unresolved. The reader can only guess what happens to Vincent in Africa and what will happen to the Vedel family, whether Laura will remain with Félix, whether Georges will reform, whether Bernard will find his authentic existence, whether Armand has a fatal disease, whether Passavant will finally publish his avant-garde journal with Strouvilhou as editor and "demonetize" literature and, of course, whether Edouard will ever write his pure novel. From this perspective, the novel opens toward the future of infinite possibilities. These loose ends present problems for those accustomed to the typically

closed form of the realist novel that draws all the loose ends together at the end.

Esthetics and Ethics

There is a general sense of resignation in all of these characters, even Edouard who, though seemingly unaffected by the events, is no closer to writing the pure novel he has been talking about and only looks forward to getting to know Bernard's younger brother Caloub. Nothing, in effect has been resolved. It is as if the only resolution to the narrator's dilemma at the end of Part II is to stifle the existential freedom of these characters who have come to life through his pen but over whose existence he has lost control.

. . . devant l'imminence de la mort, il se poursuit dans une hâte extrême, mais aussi il recommence, se raconte lui-même, découvre le récit du récit et cet emboîtement qui pourrait bien ne s'achever jamais. Le langage, sur la ligne de la mort, se réfléchit: il y rencontre comme un miroir
 . . . 16

Boris' suicide is the apotheosis toward which the narration builds. The third part begins with La Pérouse's aborted suicide attempt. The beginning of Chapter 9, in other words in the middle of the third part, Olivier attempts suicide and is saved by Edouard. In the final

chapter death finally comes as a provisional solution to the narrator's dilemma.

. . . la part invisible, mais qui est essentiellement la pression de la narration elle-même, le mouvement merveilleux et terrible que le fait d'écrire exerce sur la vérité, tourment, torture, violence qui conduisent finalement à la mort où tout paraît se révéler, où tout cependant retombe dans le doute et le vide des ténèbres.¹⁷

One might say that there is no solid footing in this novel of shifting and unreliable narrative voice. If the internal chronology of Les Faux-Monnayeurs is deceptive, it is fair to say that the historical setting of the novel is just as problematic. Goulet provides a valuable close reading of the text to situate it in history. He concludes that the majority of events must occur between 1906 and 1910, although there are historical references ranging from 1897 to 1919.¹⁸ The gold coin disappeared from circulation in 1914 which makes that date a limit since a good part of the intrigue centers around counterfeited gold coins. However, as Goulet points out, there are ample references to events after the war, particularly to the dadaist movement, born in Zurich in 1916, and to freudian theory which, according to Goulet, was largely unknown in France until 1920. The only year mentioned in the novel is 1904, the vintage of a bottle of Montrachet that Edouard recalls being refused by an acquaintance of his. This then would be a

limit on the other end. However, while at the Banquet des Argonautes, Edouard mentions that Alfred Jarry's Ubu Roi has just been booed by the public. The first representation of Ubu Roi was in December, 1896, making this another anachronism.

Les Faux-Monnayeurs is inaccurate both in its internal chronology and in its exterior reference to historical events. Foreseeing the inevitable attempts of critics to situate his novel and reduce it to a roman à clef, Gide seems to perversely invite anecdotal criticism à la Sainte-Beuve by multiplying references to easily identifiable people and historical events while at the same time rendering it totally ineffectual as a means of analyzing his novel. In affirming the purity of the novel form, Gide plays with its narrative relationship to history, asserting its independence and specificity.

But there is much more happening in this novel than thumbing one's nose at the critics. History is present, not only in the contingent events that happened at a certain moment in time, but in the dynamic process of history. It is like the crystal of the counterfeit coin, hidden beneath the thin gold patina of the narrative events that wears off with use to reveal the abstraction. Raymond Mahieu has written a brilliant article in which he has shown the subtle integration of history as a concept within Les Faux-Monnayeurs. He says, "Si l'Histoire se fait parler ici,

c'est à coup sûr moyennant des médiatisations, sur un mode oblique et allusif."¹⁹ Mahieu organizes his argument around what he calls two insistant motifs: a fable and an object.

The fable is the story that Vincent tells about the territorial imperatives of certain fish and the peculiar ability to adapt to their environment of certain others during the evening with Passavant and Lillian at Rambouillet. The first question that Mahieu poses is whether this zoology lecture should indeed be qualified as a story. The only answer is that within the novel it is explicitly presented as such. More interesting though is the fact that this seemingly banal story is retold in abbreviated form by several different narrators during the course of the novel. This circulation of the story among the characters presents several traits characteristic of economic exchange, particularly in the case of the use Passavant makes of it. Passavant recounts his version of the story in modified form, and as if it were the fruit of his own studies, to Olivier not so much to instruct him about natural history as to impress him and win his admiration with an 'original' idea. Mahieu sees here a transformation of the story from use value, as instructional material, to an exchange value, through which Passavant obtains Olivier's admiration. This circulation of texts within Les Faux-Monnayeurs, either written texts, such as letters, which are passed around among characters, or stories told by various characters and

retold by others to different ends, is a reflection of the changing status of language, especially artistic language, within an evolving economic context.

Ce n'est que dans une société de marché dans laquelle, à côté des livres et des oeuvres d'art transformés en marchandises, l'écriture elle-même est commercialisée, que les clichés apparaissent: Des combinaisons de mots, des phrases et des figures rhétoriques produites pour le marché, pour l'échange.²⁰

Mahieu argues convincingly that this particular story is of crucial importance in the novel and all the more so because of the way in which it circulates among characters. We have already shown in a previous chapter how other texts within Les Faux-Monnayeurs circulate among the characters and reappear unexpectedly; but there is another very telling part of Gide's project that opens the novel to the outside world. That, of course, is the Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs that he published soon afterwards. This is what one might call a mise en abyme extra-diégétique, to follow Genette's terminology. Gide's Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs is a mirror image of Edouard's journal, as a sort of captain's log of narrative navigation. There are numerous passages from Gide's journal that are reproduced in Edouard's journal or elsewhere in the novel. This tends to reenforce the identification between Gide and his protagonist Edouard. Gide also provides the reader with the "sources" of some of

the primary events in his novel by reproducing newspaper clippings and autobiographical references. The effect of this added dimension to Les Faux-Monnayeurs is double. On the one hand it places the novel all the more firmly in history, but on the other hand, as a final irony, in pointing to this relationship Gide shows the essential quality of art as a transformation of reality into form.

In the middle of the novel Edouard tells his friends in Saas-Fée that his novel has no subject but is a novel about the process and problems of writing a novel, "Ce que je veux, c'est présenter d'une part la réalité, présenter d'autre part cet effort pour la styliser . . ." (III,p.1081) Later in the same conversation he tells how he is proceeding

. . . au lieu de me contenter de résoudre, à mesure qu'elle se propose, chaque difficulté (et toute oeuvre d'art n'est que la somme ou le produit des solutions d'une quantité de menues difficultés successives), chacune de ces difficultés, je l'expose, je l'étudie. . . . si je ne parviens pas à l'écrire, ce livre, c'est que l'histoire du livre m'aura plus intéressé que le livre lui-même; qu'elle aura pris sa place . . . (III,p.1083)

Sophoniska astutely accuses Edouard of writing a novel in which ideas will have greater importance than human beings, to which Edouard responds, "Les idées . . . , les idées, je vous l'avoue, m'intéresse plus que les hommes; m'intéresse par-dessus tout." (III,p.1084) But the only thing certain about Edouard's novel is the title, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, the

same title as the novel in which he is a character. The reader is naturally drawn into the discussion of this mirror image of the novel he is reading and his interest is certainly piqued by Bernard's question as to who the counterfeiters are because, up to this point in the novel, no mention has been made of any counterfeiters. Edouard's response is that he has no idea. The reader will later be introduced to the band of counterfeiters, a group of adolescents directed by the shadowy figure, Strouvilhou, but they occupy only a marginal place in the novel. Edouard in fact does have an idea. At first he thought of his fellow writers as counterfeiters, particularly Passavant, but his idea had quickly become more generalized and extended beyond his characters into abstraction, "Les idées de change, de dévalorisation, d'inflation, peu à peu envahissaient son livre . . . où elles usurpaient la place des personnages." (III, p.1085) The ideas around which his novel will be constructed then are economic ideas, more specifically ideas related to monetary theory. Mahieu writes

Comment croire que l'esthétique seul soit ici en jeu, dans son idéale clôture? A la vérité, dans un monde totalement monétarisé, emporté dans le décodage délirant de l'abstraction universelle, tout, et y compris le projet artistique, se résout en monnaie, et, nécessairement, en fausse monnaie.²¹

What more perfect metaphor for a work of fiction than this counterfeit coin--the appearance and sound of reality covering a crystalline structure.

Les Faux-Monnayeurs is rife with money metaphors. Some of the most obvious examples, are the "singulière incapacité de jauger son crédit dans le coeur et l'esprit d'autrui" (III,p.991) common to Edouard and Olivier, or "C'était l'heure douteuse où la nuit s'achève et où le diable fait ses comptes" (III,p.973) as Vincent triumphantly returns to Lillian's apartment after winning back his money at Pedro's casino. Bernard tells Laura that he wants to, "Valoir exactement ce qu'on paraît; ne pas chercher à paraître plus qu'on ne vaut . . ." (III,p.1094) Bernard and Laura both feel indebted to Edouard. Laura feels uneasy living "aux dépens d'Edouard" because she "donne rien en échange." (III,p.1076) Bernard wants to repay Edouard as well--". . . monnayeur les richesses dont il soupesait en son coeur l'abondance." (III,p.1078) Beyond these metaphorical references to money are all of the direct references that often govern the relationships among characters. Passavant finances Vincent and later Olivier. He also finances the avant-garde literary journal and those connected with it. Edouard finances Bernard, Laura, La Pérouse, and the Vedel family. Albéric Profitendieu feels uncomfortable around Oscar Molinier because Profitendieu, though lower in rank,

is wealthier and he "doit se faire pardonner sa fortune."
(III,p.939)

But it is the counterfeit coin that occupies the central place in Les Faux-Monnayeurs and is a perfect example of what Ricardou has termed a structural metaphor, as opposed to an expressive metaphor. Rather than simply expressing an idea or a theme within the discourse, it is a metaphor around which the text organizes itself, a generator of the text. This is also the sense of Dällenbach's transcendental mise en abyme. Not only is the counterfeit coin a representation of the text, but it is also at the origin of the text as a fundamental key to its meaning. Gide's mentor, Mallarmé also used the metaphor of a coin to represent words in his "Variations sur un sujet"

Narrer, enseigner, même décrire, cela va et encore qu'à chacun suffirait peut-être pour échanger la pensée humaine, de prendre ou de mettre dans la main d'autrui en silence une pièce de monnaie, l'emploi élémentaire du discours dessert l'universel reportage dont, la littérature exceptée, participe tout entre les genres d'écrits contemporains.²²

Raymond Mahieu finds the counterfeit coin to be a representation of all money, necessarily a false form of value, arbitrarily evaluated, always subject to devaluation and, as a result, the factor of universal disorder. The value of the counterfeit coin is inherently unstable. When it is first introduced, it has been bought by Bernard for

five francs from the merchant who had previously accepted at its face value of ten francs. Its true value for the producer was the cost of the materials, estimated by Bernard to be worth a little more than two cents. Georges and his friends buy the ten franc coins for one franc apiece. Mahieu finds a clear lesson in this

. . . cet instrument de l'échange, qui n'a d'autre raison d'être que de fournir, comme mesure fixe, un pivot à toutes transactions, ne répond pas à ce qu'on attend de lui, puisqu'on le découvre sans valeur stable. La pièce se définit comme fluctuation pure . . .²³

Strouvilhou's conversation with Passavant is the key to this broader understanding, as he quotes Gresham's Law: "la mauvaise monnaie chasse la bonne." (III, p.1198) The counterfeit coin undermines the value of authentic money by placing all money in doubt, just as Georges' friend Philippe wants to ask after Georges has bought cigarettes with one of the false coins and returns with the change, "Tu es sûr au moins qu'ils sont bons, ceux-la?" (III, p.1146) Mahieu sees here a larger problem of a socio-economic nature,

. . . Gide ouvre le procès, non seulement de la monnaie, mais en même temps du total dérèglement que son utilisation généralisée inflige aux sociétés qui en ont fait leur loi. Installer ainsi l'économie, ses contradictions et ses implications, au centre du roman, ce serait sans nul doute l'ouvrir tout grand à l'Histoire . . .²⁴

Holdheim takes a somewhat different tack to arrive at a similar point of view. He sees within Les Faux-Monnayeurs a thematic of social forgery and, once again, inscribes this theme within the problematic of time

Falsification is this world's principle of movement, the mainspring of a universal dynamism based on appearance and make-believe. Appropriately it is Strouvilhou who finds the perfect definition of this theme in Gresham's law . . . There rises the image of inflation, which is nothing else than false (devaluative) growth--a perpetually active substitution of the false for the genuine, a qualitatively degraded version of "becoming."²⁵

The counterfeit coin is more than a metaphor for literature as a false representation of reality. It is the means by which Gide places his narrative within the general problematic of the possibility of language to represent and of the search for authentic values.

In one of the most brilliant re-evaluations of Gide's novel in recent years, Jean-Joseph Goux forcefully argues that Les Faux-Monnayeurs is an exemplary representation of a fundamental crisis in values in the early Twentieth Century.²⁶ Goux organizes his analysis around three key concepts that constantly reappear as themes in Gide's text, money, language and paternity; concepts that determine our mode of symbolization and social exchange.

It is no mere coincidence that the action of Les Faux-Monnayeurs is situated before the disappearance of the gold

coin from circulation and the writing of the novel afterwards. Goux sees the shift away from money that actually contains the value which is inscribed on its face to a form of money that only represents that same value, but in principle may be converted into a fixed quantity of gold, to, finally, a conventional money that cannot be converted and, indeed, is of indeterminate value and subject to the forces of time in the forms of inflation and devaluation as both Mahieu and Holdheim have already pointed out. To reenforce his arguments, Goux refers to a text on monetary theory written at the end of the Nineteenth Century written by none other than Charles Gide, André's uncle and eminent professor of economy at the Collège de France. But Goux goes beyond the previous two critics in his analysis of the relationship between money and language. He establishes an homology between the three phases in the development of monetary value and a similar series of developments in literature.

Victor Hugo' writing is the avatar of a golden language that pretends to the fullness of being, able to immediately express both the subjectivity of the interior world and the objectivity of the exterior world. Such a language is both expressive and descriptive

Il est pensé comme le véhicule adéquat du sens, ce par quoi se signifient pleinement l'âme et le monde, et cette plénitude de la signification langagière permet l'économie de toute

interrogation sur la valeur du langage dans son rapport à l'être.²⁷

In Les Faux-Monnayeurs this point of view is represented by Bernard particularly in chapter four of Part II during his discussion with Laura concerning sincerity, "Valoir exactement ce qu'on paraît; ne pas chercher à paraître plus qu'on ne vaut ..." (III, p.1094) Bernard also argues with Edouard that a novelist should be simple and direct in his representation of the world.

It is Zola whom Goux designates as the avatar of representative paper money. Here the question of the convertibility of the sign for the thing becomes problematic. For the naturalist writer, language is an instrument

Le langage ne sera plus pensé comme exprimant pleinement . . . la réalité, l'être; il sera nécessairement conçu comme un moyen, un instrument, relativement autonome, à l'aide duquel il est possible de se faire une certaine représentation, plus ou moins exacte de la réalité.²⁸

It is Passavant who offers the best illustration of this mimetic function of language as a instrument of exchange between individuals. Mahieu says of Passavant: "Dispensateur de propos toujours maîtrisés, ayant réponse (ou réplique) à tout, l'écrivain mondain apparaît comme une figure exemplaire de régulateur des échanges langagiers . . ." ²⁹

Passavant, the decadent aristocrat who is always short of money, is the banker of language and Mahieu goes further in his description of Passavant's language

Les propositions anodines de Passavant . . . désignent, sous-tendant le mouvement de la parole, un univers, totalement ouvert, décloisonné, fluide, de l'échange marchand, où tout est susceptible de se dissoudre dans la conversion, où rien ne s'offre plus qui ne puisse s'évaluer sur le fond d'une équivalence généralisée.³⁰

When language is no longer conceived either as an imaginary gold money or as an imaginary convertible money but simply as conventional money that cannot be converted,

. . . c'est un moment véritablement critique de la confiance dans la valeur du langage qui s'annonce. Cette crise touche la philosophie comme la littérature, et elle atteint aussi, et peut-être d'abord, la théorie même du langage.³¹

Ferdinand de Saussure and Hjelmslev represent two modern currents of linguistic theory that are founded on the idea of the inconvertibility of signs. For both of them, as with conventional money, there is nothing outside of language that acts as its foundation; language is a relational and differential system. In language like in money there is a disincarnation of value.

Irony

To return to Les Faux-Monnayeurs, Gide finds himself faced with the impossibility of language to reflect objective reality or to express subjective reality and presents two possible responses to this situation in the radical stances of two of his characters. Strouvilhou represents the tragic and destructive attitude which Goux identifies with Nietzsche's nihilistic response to the death of God.

Il peut avouer et revendiquer la banqueroute
du langage, dénonçant l'illusion de la
convertibilité par une écriture qui se donne
explicitement comme non-convertible.³²

This is indeed Strouvilhou's project for Passavant's literary journal

Je vous en avertis si je dirige une revue, ce sera pour y crever des outres, pour y démonétiser tous les beaux sentiments, et ces billets à ordre: les mots." (III, p.1198)

Edouard represents the constructivist attitude that Goux relates to Plato and Kant, an intellectualist attitude that pretends to remain within the economic register of golden or representative language but manages to escape by other means. This other means employed by Edouard and by Gide is

only alluded to by Goux as a reflection on the linguistic medium, that is, a self-conscious novel that poses the problem of its relationship to the exterior world. It is through the use of irony that the modern novelist is able to establish this interior distance that allows him to express the dilemma of modern man. To quote Lukacs again,

. . . l'ironie, en donnant forme à la réalité, en tant que puissance victorieuse, ne se contente pas de révéler l'inanité de cette réalité en face de ce qu'elle a vaincu . . . mais elle montre aussi que la supériorité du monde tient beaucoup moins à sa force propre, bien trop brutalement privée de toute orientation pour lui permettre de l'emporter, qu'à une problématique interne et pourtant nécessaire de l'âme lestée d'idéal.³³

This in effect is the situation of the characters in Les Faux-Monnayeurs, all of them searching in their own way for a fullness of being. The problem is that there is no central bank of golden values where the characters can finally arrive to close out their accounts. There are no longer any criteria by which the characters can distinguish authentic values from counterfeit ones. Holdheim sees counterfeiting not as just any subject for a novel, but as the subject par excellence of the modern novel. Holdheim writes

It is traditional that a crisis of life should be reflected by the ironic self-examination of art, . . . Gide's novel has pushed this tradition to its conclusion: the absorption of the existential

critique by the literary auto-critique in the person of the hero.³⁴

Gide's crisis of life was, it would seem, perpetual. He lived in the mode of re-evaluation, in a state of dynamic tension, refusing to conclude and, in so doing, fix his being. In his 1939 preface for L'Immoraliste, Gide said,

Je ne prétends pas, certes, que la neutralité (j'allais dire: l'indécision) soit signe sûr d'un grand esprit; mais je crois que maints grands esprits ont beaucoup répugné à . . . conclure--et que bien poser un problème n'est pas le supposer d'avance résolu. (III, p.367)

Nowhere is this penchant for neutrality more evident, one might even say systematized, than in Les Faux-Monnayeurs. This dynamic tension of ambiguity is established by the distance that the author maintains between himself and the reader. The author's presence permeates the text and yet, paradoxically, he is absent from the text as guarantor of its meaning. This paradoxical situation derives from the distance established by the ironic narrator. Raymond Gay-Crosier correctly states that,

L'ironie est un phénomène qui s'infiltré dans toute activité humaine sitôt que l'agent se fait . . . acteur qui se regarde en spectateur, c'est-à-dire fait un effort de détachement lucide.³⁵

Gay-Crosier goes on to discuss irony in Les Faux-Monnayeurs from three different perspectives: the existential, the conceptual and the narratological. Gay-Crosier says that irony reflects a conflictual or binary structure of the world as we perceive it. This fundamental dualism is expressed by the principle of alterity that allows us to perceive an object other than it is in reality.³⁶

This is in effect one of the primary functions of literature; not simply that it presents a fictive world, but more importantly, how it presents the fictive reality through the use of language and form. Irony is both an affirmation and a negation. It presents what it states as true while at the same time undermining that affirmation through critical distance and self-reflection. From a conceptual point of view irony, in its alterity, figures a play between identity and non-identity, much as a metaphor both is and isn't what it seems to be. Paul Ricoeur defines a metaphor as,

un événement sémantique qui se produit au point d'intersection entre plusieurs champs sémantiques. Cette construction est le moyen par lequel tous les mots pris ensemble reçoivent sens. . . . la torsion métaphorique est à la fois un événement et une signification, un événement signifiant, une signification émergente créée par le langage.³⁷

By the same token, Gide's mise en abyme functions as a super-metaphor within the text as a play of identity and

non-identity, as shown in the previous chapter, not only within several sémantique fields at the level of the statement (énoncé), but also on the level of the enunciation and the code. The mise en abyme adds another twist to the metaphoric event. Gay-Crosier says,

L'incongru, la non-correspondance entre le monde réel et le monde perçu, c'est-à-dire interprété, est une donnée existentielle qui incite l'ironiste à réduire tout événement à un pseudo-événement, à transformer toute réalité statique et simple en fiction dynamique et complexe.³⁸

In terms of the narrative instance this goes far beyond a metaphor as a critical event that literally feeds on itself and forces the reader into a critical stance, not only in relation to the text he is reading, but in relation to the act of reading. Holdheim is certainly correct when he writes,

In the Faux-Monnayeurs at last, the self-conscious novelist in his different incarnations or disincarnations . . . coincides with the problematical individual in quest of being, the Author as such becomes the prototype of modern Man.³⁹

But it should be added that the reader is left with a deep sense of longing, what Lukacs called lucid resignation, by this ultimate ironic text.

L'ironie suprême est que l'absence du fond . . . est nécessaire à sa poursuite. . . . ni l'auteur/lecteur ni le lecteur/auteur ne saurait en occuper le centre même si au moment de l'écriture ou de la lecture il semble le faire. . . . l'écriture et la lecture sont par définition des actes décentrants qui mettent à la fois en question le ressort qui les anime, c'est-à-dire la puissante nostalgie d'unité, et la notion d'auteur original et originel.⁴⁰

NOTES

1. Gérard Genette, Figures III, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1972, p.227.
2. George Lukacs, La Théorie du roman, Paris, Gonthier, 1968, p.67.
3. Ibid., p.121.
4. Foucault, p.44.
5. Maurice Blanchot, Le Livre à venir, Paris, Gallimard, 1959, p.224.
6. Alain Goulet, Fiction et vie sociale dans l'oeuvre d'André Gide, Paris, Publications de l'Association des Amis d'André Gide, 1984-1985, p.112.
7. Ibid., p.109.
8. Roman Jakobson, "On Realism in Art," Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views, eds. Ladislav Matyka and Krystyna Pomorska, Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, 1971, p.40.
9. Hutcheon, p.97.
10. Zeraffa, p.100.
11. Hutcheon, p.96.
12. Lukacs, p.119.
13. Wolfgang Holdheim, Theory and Practice of the Novel. A Study on André Gide, Genève, Droz, 1968, p.239.

14. Ibid., p.240
15. Ibid.
16. Foucault, p.45.
17. Blanchot, p.164.
18. Goulet, p.105-109.
19. Raymond Mahieu, "Présence d'une absente ou Les Faux-Monnayeurs et l'Histoire," André Gide 7, Paris, Lettres Modernes, 1982, p.49.
20. Pierre Zima, Pour une sociologie du texte littéraire, Paris, Union Générale d'Editions, 1978, p.92.
21. Mahieu, p.63.
22. Stéphane Mallarmé, Oeuvres Complètes, Paris, Gallimard, 1945, p.368.
23. Mahieu, p.60
24. Ibid., p.61.
25. Holdheim, p.257.
26. Jean Joseph Goux, Les Monnayeurs du langage, Paris, Editions Galilée, 1984.
27. Ibid., p.27.
28. Ibid., p.30.
29. Raymond Mahieu, "Réticences et ruptures dans le récit gidien," Bulletin des Amis d'André Gide, Paris, Lettres Modernes, October, 1987, p.40.
30. Ibid., p.41.
31. Goux, p.31.
32. Ibid., p.29.
33. Lukacs, p.81.
34. Holdheim, p.260.
35. Raymond Gay-Crosier, "Régistres de l'ironie gidienne: les cas des Faux-Monnayeurs," Lecture presented at the

Colloque André Gide at the Sorbonne in Paris on January 14, 1984. p.1.

36. Ibid., p.6.

37. Paul Ricoeur, La Métaphore vive, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1975, p.127.

38. Gay-Crosier, p.6.

39. Holdheim, p.260.

40. Gay-Crosier, p.22.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Les Faux-Monnayeurs defies reduction to a single interpretation. It presents itself rather as a constellation, inviting the reader to superimpose his own cultural experience in a gesture of participation, as ancient Greek sailors did to the constellations in the sky, connecting the dots to form a mythological figure. The author of Les Faux-Monnayeurs always seems to be slipping around the corner before the reader can get a clear fix on him; leading the reader, to be sure, through a series of situations, presenting him with problems, but offering no clear answers. This is a work of modernity, moving beyond the realist novel much as Einstein moved beyond Newton, defying common sense and relativizing our notions of certainty.

I have attempted to show, on the one hand, the evolution of Gide's esthetics in reaction to commonly held esthetic principles of his age, and on the other hand, the inevitable imbrication of ethics within his esthetic point of view. Gide sought a higher plane of artistic expression that better mirrored the complex nature of human activity especially as concerns the representational activity of

language. It is undeniable that Gide was a product of his age and that Les Faux-Monnayeurs represents his age--its institutions, its social structure and its language. The system of justice is represented through Oscar Molinier and Albéric Profitendieu. The educational system is amply described at the Pension Vedel. The Comte de Passavant and Lady Griffith show the seamy side of the aristocracy. There is also a considerable amount of time spent recounting the financial transactions among the various characters. Dr. Sophroniska introduces the reader to the world of psychotherapy and Strouvilhou makes it clear that the age of commercial art has truly arrived.

Gide describes in detail the complexity of family relationships both between parents and children and among siblings. He also gives considerable attention to different types of love relationships between members of the opposite sex and members of the same sex and between lovers of different generations.

But his novel is a brilliant timeless work that speaks to the reader today. It is constructed in such a way that it poses crucial questions about art and morality without offering any clear answers, only the possibility of eternally reformulating the questions.

The Naturalist novels and the novels of psychological realism spoke from a perspective of the world and their stories oriented the reader toward a specific point of view

regarding the events and the actions of the characters. Theirs was the age of scientific or psychological certainties, or so it seemed. Positivism had imbued this generation with a sense of optimism and a belief in progress through reason. The narrators of late Nineteenth Century literature were most often omniscient, speaking to the reader from a privileged position not only in relation to the story narrated but in relation to knowledge of the world; they had a didactic function that was part and parcel of the esthetic ends. This may be understood in the context of a sudden rise in the literacy rate among the general population with no concomitant rise in the number of high school diplomas. There was a rapidly increasing market of readers from the middle and lower middle classes. But as the general population became more sophisticated and as cracks began to show in the prevailing optimistic world view of limitless progress, the novel began to experience a crisis of identity. This was not merely a question of fashion-- Nietzsche, Freud and Marx, to name only the most striking, introduced a deep feeling of doubt concerning commonly held ideas and these doubts slowly began to spread and find confirmation in the events and discoveries of the Twentieth Century.

The Symbolists, so crucial to Gide's intellectual development, helped him understand the power of language and the autonomy of art, but he found them lacking from an

ethical point of view. They remained separate from the world trapped in their solipsistic idealism. Gide was too much of a classicist to ignore the moral aspects of human activity. The world may indeed be a text in the sense that our perception and interpretation of events in the world is conditioned not only by other texts that we read over the years, but also by the rules of syntax and grammar through which we organize our perceptions into language. Language is, by its very nature, a social phenomenon, allowing man to externalize perceptions and to abstract from them. Language is not merely representational; it is intentional and implies interaction. Gide understood quite well the importance of tradition, the ability of texts to influence future generations and future texts. He also understood the importance of the reader for the author and clearly saw literature as a communicative activity. The author then bears a responsibility toward his readers for the message that he conveys. It is at this point that many of the most bitter arguments of the Twentieth Century begin--What is the nature of this responsibility?

Gide struggled against the widespread turn of the century critical stance that would reduce the literary text to a simple moral statement meant to instruct the masses and gratify the elite. As a critic he looked for internal coherence in a work of art, refusing to judge works based on a preconceived notion truth and beauty that corresponded to

the canon. Along with his colleagues at the Nouvelle Revue française he helped introduce a variety of new writers, French and foreign, to his reading public.

In his own fiction Gide attacked a series of related problems from different angles. These problems of authenticity, sincerity and the representation of reality recurred in all of his works, presented from a different perspective in each case. Moral aspects are certainly present in his work, but he sought to meet the reader on common ground, inviting active participation rather than a passive acceptance of the author's manipulation. Gide achieves this end through the lucid distance of irony.

In Les Faux-Monnayeurs, he finally attempted to bring all of the elements of his previous works together in a multivocal representation of a complex set of problems viewed from several angles simultaneously. It is the *mise en abyme* that permits the multiple presentation and creates the necessity of participation. The form of the novel perfectly mirrors the problems that constitute its theme. The reader not only reads about the difficulties of authenticity, sincerity and communication, but also experiences them as an event in the novel through the shifting perspective of the *mise en abyme*. Gide has managed to show that the fundamental problems of esthetics are, from a conceptual point of view, the same as those of our ethical existence.

Les Faux-Monnayeurs is a great novel because it synthesizes, in a subtle marriage of form and content, the preoccupations of its age. It is a brilliant provocation to reflect about language and values.

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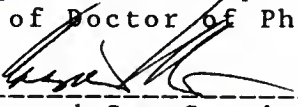
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

I was born in Sanford, Florida, in 1950, but my family moved to North Carolina the following year. I attended school in North Carolina, first in Charlotte then in Fayetteville for junior high and high school. I graduated from Fayetteville Senior High School in 1968. I attended Davidson College in North Carolina from 1968 until 1972. While a student at Davidson, I spent my junior year (1970-1971) in Montpellier, France. I was enrolled as an auditor in the Faculté des Lettres Paul Valéry. After my graduation from Davidson in 1972, I returned to Montpellier to work and to improve my French. I came back to the United States in 1973 to work. In the Summer of 1974 I went to Bogota, Colombia, where I studied Spanish for two months at the Universidad de los Andès. I enrolled in a master's program in French at the State University of New York at Buffalo in the Fall of 1974. I was a teaching assistant there for one year when I decided to return to France. I lived in Toulouse for the next three years. In the Spring of 1978 I applied for admission to the graduate program in French at the University of Florida. I received a teaching assistantship and began work on my doctorate. After completing my qualifying exams in the Spring of 1981, I took a leave of

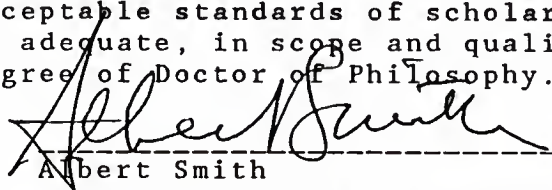
absence for two years, in France, before returning to complete my dissertation. I was hired by Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, in 1985 as an assistant professor of French.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



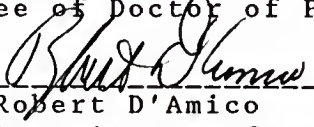
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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



Albert Smith
Professor of Romance Languages
and Literatures

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April, 1988

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